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Nick Carter Stories

A FATAL MESSAGE

OR

NICK CARTER'S SLENDER CLEW

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NICK CARTER STORIES

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A FATAL MESSAGE;

Or, NICK CARTER'S SLENDER CLEW.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A SUSPICIOUS WIRE.

Nick Carter leaned nearer to the wall and listened to what the two men were discussing.

The wall was that of a booth in the café of the Shelby House. It was a partition of matched sheathing only, through which ordinary conversation in the adjoining booth could be easily overheard, and both men in this case spoke above an ordinary tone.

Obviously, therefore, they were discussing nothing of a private nature, or anything thought to be of much importance, or serious significance. It meant no more to them, in fact, than it would have meant to most men, to all save one in a million.

That one in a million was seated alone in the next booth—Nick Carter.

The two men were strangers to the detective. They had entered when he was near the end of his lunch, and while waiting for their orders to be served they engaged in the conversation which, though heard only by chance, soon seriously impressed the detective.

"You were a little later than usual this noon, Belden," said one.

"Yes, a few minutes, Joe, but I thought you would wait for me. My ticker got busy just as I was about to leave. I remained to take the dispatch, Gordon, and it proved to be quite a long one."

"Something important?"

"Not very. Only political news for the local paper."

"Belden evidently is a telegraph operator," thought Nick.

"Anything warm by wire this morning?" questioned Gordon.

"No, nothing," said Belden; and then he abruptly added: "There was a singular message, however, and an unusual circumstance in connection with it."

"How so, Arthur?"

"The dispatch was addressed to John Dalton, and we were instructed to hold it till called for," Belden explained. "I looked in the local directory, but it contained no John Dalton. I inferred that he was a traveling man, or a visitor in town, whose address was not known by the sender."

"Naturally."

"Strange to say, however, he showed up in about five minutes and asked if we had a dispatch for him."

"Why, is there anything strange in that? He evidently was expecting it."

"It was strange that he came in so quickly, almost while I was receiving the message. That, too, was singular."

"The message?"

"Yes."

"Why so?"

"As I remember it, Joe, it read: 'Dust flying. S. D. on way. Ware eagle.'" said Belden. "It was signed with only a single name—'Martin.'"

It was then that Nick Carter pricked up his ears and leaned nearer to the wall to hear what the two men were saying.

"By Jove, that was a bit singular," remarked Gordon.

"I thought so."

"Dust flying, eh?" Gordon laughed. "The dispatch must have come from a windy city."

"It came from Philadelphia."

"I'm wrong, then. Not even dust flies in Philadelphia. Did Dalton send an answer?"

"Not that I know of; certainly not from our office."

"Or volunteer any explanation?"

"No. It probably was a code message, or had some secret significance. He took the dispatch and departed."

"A stranger to you, eh?"

"Total stranger. I don't imagine the message amounted

to anything. It appeared a bit odd, however, and—ah, here's our grub," Belden broke off abruptly. "The Martini is mine, waiter. Here's luck, Joe."

It was obvious to Nick that the discussion of the telegram was ended. He immediately arose and departed. He sauntered into the hotel office, then out through the adjoining corridor, which just then was deserted, of which he took advantage. He quickly adjusted a simple disguise with which he was provided, and he then passed out of a side door leading to the street. Nick was watching the café when the two men emerged. He followed them until Gordon parted from his companion and entered a large hardware store, where he evidently was employed.

Arthur Belden walked on leisurely alone, and Nick judged that he was heading for the main office of the Western Union Company, whose sign projected from a building some fifty yards away. The detective walked more rapidly, and quickly overtook him.

"How are you, Belden?" said he, slipping his hand through the young man's arm. "Don't appear surprised. Pretend that you know me. I have something to say to you."

Belden was quick-witted, and he immediately nodded and smiled.

"I will explain presently," Nick continued. "We'll wait until we are under cover. It's barely possible that we are observed. You work in the telegraph office, don't you?"

"Yes. I'm assistant manager."

"Got a private office?"

"Yes. I receive and send most of the important dispatches."

"Good enough. I'm going with you to your office. Carry yourself as if it was nothing unusual. Fine day overhead, isn't it?"

"Yes, great," laughed Belden, gazing up. "This way. We'll cross here."

Nick accompanied him across the street into the building. Not until they were seated in his private office, however, did the detective refer to the matter actuating him.

"I was in the adjoining booth while you and your friend Gordon were discussing a telegram received here this morning," Nick then explained. "I wish to talk with you about it."

"For what reason?" questioned Belden, more sharply regarding him. "Have you any authority in the matter?"

"Yes."

"How so? Who are you?"

Nick saw plainly that the young man was trustworthy. He smiled agreeably, yet said, quite impressively:

"This is strictly between us, Belden, so be sure that you don't betray my confidence under any circumstances. I am in Shelby on very important business. Any indiscretion on your part might prove very costly. You read your local newspaper and must know me by name, at least. I am the New York detective, Nick Carter."

Belden's frank face underwent a decided change. He quickly extended his hand, saying earnestly:

"By gracious, I ought to have guessed it. Know you by name—well, I should say so! I'm mighty glad to meet you, too, Mr. Carter, and to be of any service. The local paper has, indeed, had a good deal to say about you and your mission here, as well as about your running down Karl Glidden's murderer, Jim Reardon. Yes, by Jove, I ought to have guessed it."

Belden referred to recent events. The secret employment of Nick and his assistants to run down the perpetrators of a long series of crimes on the S. & O. Railway, his investigation of the murder of the night operator in one of the block-signal towers, resulting in the detection and death of the culprit, James Reardon, and the arrest of several of his associates suspected of being identified with the railway outlaws, though their guilt could not then be proved—all had occurred during the ten days that Nick Carter, Chick, and Patsy had been in Shelby, and all still were vividly fresh in the public mind.

Nick smiled faintly at Belden's enthusiastic remarks.

"We still have much to accomplish here," he replied, referring to himself and his assistants. "We got James Reardon, all right, and cleaned up that signal-tower mystery, which was what we first undertook to do. That did not clinch our suspicions against some of his associates, however, as I had hoped it would do. I refer to Jake Hanlon, Link Magee, and Dick Bryan, who have succeeded in wriggling from under the wheels of justice."

"But you expect to get them later?"

"I expect to, yes," said Nick. "But my identity and mission in Shelby now are generally known. That has put the railway bandits on their guard, which makes our work more difficult. But that's neither here nor there, Mr. Belden, and I am wasting time. I wish to see a copy of that telegram you were discussing with Gordon and to ask you a few questions about it."

"Go ahead. Go as far as you like, Mr. Carter. I'll never mention a word of it," Belden earnestly assured him.

"Good for you," Nick replied. "About what time was the telegram received?"

"Precisely ten o'clock."

"And Dalton called for it almost immediately?"

"Within three or four minutes."

"That indicates that he was expecting it at just that time," said Nick. "If I am right, and I think I am, he was acting under plans previously laid with the sender, Martin, or he was otherwise informed just when the message would be sent. Do you recall ever having received another dispatch from Philadelphia signed Martin?"

"I do not," said Belden, shaking his head.

"What type of man is Dalton? Describe him."

"He is a well-built man, about forty years old, quite dark, and he wears a full beard. He was clad in a plaid business suit."

"The beard may have been a disguise."

"I think I would have detected it."

"You do not detect mine," smiled Nick. "He may be equally skillful."

"There may be something in that," Belden admitted, laughing. "At all events, Mr. Carter, the man was a total stranger to me. But why do you regard the message so suspiciously?"

"Have you a copy of it?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Let me see it."

Belden stepped into the outer office, returning presently with a spindle, on which were copies of all of the

telegrams received that day. He began to remove them, seeking the one in question, and Nick said, while waiting:

"By the way, Belden, have you received any other telegrams from Philadelphia this morning, or within a day or two?"

"Yes. There was one this morning."

"Let me see that, also. Was it received before the other, or later?"

"About an hour earlier."

"Let me see both of them."

"Here is the first one," said Belden. "It was received at nine o'clock. See for yourself, Mr. Carter."

Nick took the telegram and read it:

"Gus Dewitt, Reddy House, Shelby: Ten will hit me. Quickest route. A. Monaker."

It was a message that would have signified very little to most men. It might have been an ordinary business communication, a wire concerning the price and quantity of desired merchandise and the direction for shipping it.

Nick Carter's strong, clean-cut face, however, took on a more intent expression.

"By Jove, I am right," he said. "It's a hundred to one that this was sent to notify Dalton just when to call for the message."

"Why do you think so?" Belden inquired, leaning nearer to read the telegram.

"For three reasons," said Nick. "First, the signature—A. Monaker."

"What about it? It evidently is a man's name. I see nothing remarkable in that."

"There is, nevertheless," Nick replied. "Monaker, Belden, is a slang term for a nickname. Undoubtedly in this case it refers to a fictitious name, or an alias. It means, I think, that an alias would be used in the message afterward sent, signed Martin and addressed to John Dalton, presumably an alias of which Dalton already was informed."

"By gracious, Carter, you may be right."

"Ten will hit me told Dalton at just what time he must expect the message. He was, in effect, directed to call for it at that hour. Obviously, too, the business is secret and important, as well as off color, or such a circumspect method of communication would not be necessary."

"Surely not," Belden agreed. "But what do you make of the last—quickest route?"

"By wire, Belden, of course," said Nick. "A telegram is the quickest means of communication when the telephone cannot be wisely and conveniently used."

"That's right, too," Belden readily admitted. "By Jove, you have a long head, Mr. Carter."

"Training enables one to detect such points as these," Nick replied. "Do you know Gus Dewitt, to whom this message is addressed?"

"I do not."

"It was sent to the Reddy House."

"Yes. It may have been signed for by the clerk, or delivered to Dewitt himself. The boy who took it there could tell us, but he is out just now. You can telephone to the Reddy House and find out."

"Not by a long chalk," Nick quickly objected. "I don't want my interest in this matter suspected. Have you found the other message?"

"Yes, here it is."

Belden tendered the yellow paper on which the copied message was written.

CHAPTER II.

THE INTERCEPTED LETTER.

Nick Carter read more carefully the telegram discussed in the hotel café, and which had so seriously aroused his suspicions.

"John Dalton, Shelby: Dust flying. S. D. on way. Ware eagle. Martin."

Belden watched the detective for a moment, then asked:

"What do you make of it? Dust flying seems to have no definite significance."

"On the contrary, Belden, it is very significant to me," said Nick. "You have heard it said, no doubt, that some men have dust on their clothes, others in them."

"Dust—you mean money?"

"Exactly. There is money moving in some way, Belden, or about to be moved, of which felonious advantage is going to be taken. In other words, Belden, crooks are out to get the money."

"Ah, I see!" Belden exclaimed, with eyes lighting. "You suspect that a crime is being framed up."

"Precisely. I feel reasonably sure of it, in fact."

"For any other reason?"

"Yes. Notice the last phrase in the message."

"Ware eagle," said Belden, reading it. "What the deuce can you make of that? Is one of them to wear an eagle, or some such insignia?"

"Not at all," said Nick. "It's a warning."

"A warning?"

"Surely. Observe the spelling of 'ware.' The word does not refer to something to be worn, or it would be properly spelled. It is an abbreviation of the word beware. In reality, Belden, the phrase means: Beware eagle."

"But how do you interpret that?" questioned Belden perplexedly. "Why is Dalton to beware of an eagle. I can't see any sense to that."

Nick laughed a bit grimly.

"I can," he said tersely. "Crooks have favored me with all sorts of names and epithets. I am the eagle referred to, Belden, as sure as you're a foot high."

"Ah! I see the point."

"This man, Martin, the sender of the message, has warned Dalton to beware of me," Nick added. "It was that phrase that first led me to suspect the character of the entire message. It is generally known, now, that I am here in the service of the S. & O. Railway. This message convinces me, therefore, that another of the railway crimes is about to be attempted. It's up to me to head it off, if possible, or at least to get the outlaws."

"By Jove, you are a wonderful man, Mr. Carter," said Belden, with much enthusiasm. "There is no denying that you probably have interpreted both messages correctly."

"I think so," said Nick modestly.

"But how can you head off the anticipated crime, or succeed in getting the outlaws?"

"That's another part of the story," Nick replied, smiling.

"One of them evidently is on the way here. Some one whose initials are S. D.," added Belden, glancing at the message. "If you can identify him and find Gus Dewitt ——"

"I shall certainly do the latter," Nick interposed. "But you are wrong in regard to the other."

"How so?"

"S. D. does not, in all probability, refer to a man."

"A woman?"

"No."

"To what, then?"

"To a special-delivery letter," said Nick confidently.

"Oh, by thunder!" Belden exclaimed. "That must be right, too. "You have nailed every point in both of these messages."

"And the next step, Belden, is to nail the special-delivery letter," Nick declared. "It presumably is coming from Philadelphia, and most likely sent by this man Martin. Do you know whether a mail from Philadelphia has arrived here since ten this morning?"

"There has not," said Belden promptly. "I know all about the mails. One is due here from Philadelphia at two o'clock."

"Very good. Let me use your telephone to talk with one of my assistants. I want him to meet me at the post office."

"Certainly. Go as far as you like."

"In the meantime, Belden, kindly make me a copy of each of these messages," Nick added, turning to the telephone. "I then will be off to intercept that special-delivery letter. I may yet succeed, I think, in putting something over on Martin, Dalton, and Dewitt."

Belden hastened to comply.

Nick called up the Shelby House, in the meantime, and quickly got in communication with Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan, his two assistants, both of whom he directed to meet him in disguise at the local post office. Then, having again cautioned Belden to absolute secrecy, Nick hastened away to keep the appointment.

It was half past one when he entered the post office, where he found Chick and Patsy awaiting him. Without delaying to explain the situation, he at once led the way to the private office of the postmaster, Adam Holden, who readily gave him an interview.

Nick then made himself known, introducing Chick and Patsy, after which he exhibited the two telegrams, confiding his suspicions to Holden and stating what he required of him.

"But that is decidedly against the law, Mr. Carter, the intercepting and opening of another person's letter," Holden forcibly objected. "I don't see how I can consent to let you do so. It is a very serious offense."

"Not nearly as serious as the circumstances," Nick forcibly argued. "When dealing with offenders against the law, with a gang of criminals engaged in we know not what, nor have other means of learning, an unlawful step in order to foil them and serve the law may very properly be taken."

"Possibly. I do not feel, nevertheless, that I can permit——"

"Now, Holden, you wait one moment," Nick interrupted. "It is absolutely necessary that I shall see that letter. I will assume all of the responsibility."

"But——"

"Or, if you prefer," Nick cut in impressively, "I will send Chick to Judge Barclay, of the local court, and get from him a special order to open the letter. He is corporation counsel for the S. & O. Railway Company and will have a very keen appreciation of the circumstances. Bear in mind, too, that the letter is not to be held up permanently. It will be delayed only a very few minutes, and the recipient will be none the wiser. I can open and reseal the letter without his even suspecting it."

"Very well," Holden said reluctantly. "You get an order from the court, Mr. Carter, and I will yield to your wishes."

"Attend to it, Chick," said Nick, turning to his assistant. "State the circumstances to Judge Barclay and bring the order here as quickly as possible. You will have no trouble in getting it."

"Surely not," Chick agreed, rising to go. "He has absolutely confidence in your judgment. I'll return within a quarter hour."

"You have ample time," put in Holden. "The mail will not be in for nearly half an hour."

"Very good," said Nick. "In the meantime, Patsy, you go to the Reddy House and see what you can learn about Gus Dewitt. You will probably find him there, for he must be expecting the special-delivery letter and should be waiting for it."

"Sure thing, chief, if the game is what you suspect," Patsy declared.

"Be off, then, and phone me here," Nick directed. "Make sure you do nothing to arouse his suspicions."

"Trust me for that."

"Look up Dalton, also, and see what you can learn about him. Call me up in half an hour for further instructions."

"I've got you, chief," said Patsy, hastening to depart.

Nick waited patiently.

Postmaster Holden appeared nervous and uncertain. He was relieved in about fifteen minutes, however, by the return of Chick, bringing from the magistrate the order Nick had requested.

Ten minutes later a mail wagon rattled into the post-office yard, and Holden went to bring all of the special-delivery letters to his private office.

There proved to be only six of them, and the one referred to in the telegram was easily determined. It bore the Philadelphia postmark and was addressed to Gus Dewitt, at the Reddy House.

"How can you open and reseal it?" Holden questioned doubtfully, while the detective examined the letter.

"Very easily," said Nick.

"So that it will not be detected?"

"Surely. A little steam will turn the trick, no wax having been applied to the flap of the envelope. Your radiator will serve us. We'll find out in about two minutes what this letter contains."

Nick arose while speaking and stepped to the radiator. He turned the key of the small air tube and opened the valve. A faint blowing and sputtering ensued, soon followed by the ejection of a slender stream of steam.

Nick adjusted it carefully, then held the back of the envelope in the thread of steam until the heat and moisture softened the paste on the flap, which he then

opened without injury, removing the letter and laying the envelope aside to dry.

"Now, Chick, we'll see what Martin has to say in this special delivery," he remarked complacently, while unfolding the single sheet of paper so artfully taken from its cover.

Chick drew nearer to gaze at it.

The communication also was typewritten, on a sheet of perfectly plain paper. It read as follows:

"DEAR GUS: The pay-roll package goes through to-night, Tuesday, on the Southern Limited. We'll have the substitute down fine in ample time, and the other dead to rights. Be on hand to relieve us of the goods at the point agreed upon. Nothing doing until south of North Dayton. It looks like a walk-over. I will see you after turning the trick. MARTIN."

Nick Carter glanced through the letter, then read it aloud to his two companions. The significance of it could not be mistaken.

"By gracious!" Holden exclaimed. "You were right, Mr. Carter. It's a job to rob the express car on the Southern Limited."

"Nothing less," said Nick. "I suspected something of the kind."

"That train is due here from Philadelphia soon after midnight."

"A fit hour for such a felonious job," Nick declared. "But we must be equal to the needs of the hour. Not a word of this to others, Holden, under any circumstances."

"Surely not. You can depend upon my discretion."

"I will make a copy of this letter. You then may reseal it and have it delivered precisely as if it had not been opened."

"I will do so, Mr. Carter."

It took Nick only a few moments to make the copy. Holden had not finished resealing the letter, however, when the ringing of the telephone was the harbinger of a communication from Patsy.

"Hold that letter until after I have a talk with him," Nick directed.

Patsy's report was brief and to the point.

"John Dalton is not known here," said he, speaking from a booth in the Reddy House. "Gus Dewitt arrived here two days ago. He has been here on other occasions for a day or two, but nothing definite is known about him. He now is in the hotel office and evidently is waiting for the special-delivery letter."

"Anything more?" Nick inquired.

"That's all to date," returned Patsy. "I've got my eye on the man."

"Keep it on him, Patsy, after he receives the letter," Nick directed. "Shadow him, if possible, or find some way to trail him. Listen while I tell you what the letter contains. It may be of advantage to you."

"Shoot! I'm all ears," said Patsy.

Nick then repeated the letter verbatim and told Patsy of what his suspicions consisted, again directing him to make a special mark of Dewitt until otherwise instructed. Replacing the receiver, Nick then turned to the postmaster and said:

"Now, Holden, you may send that letter along. Take it from me, too, that Dalton will not be the wiser—until I snap a pair of bracelets on his wrists."

"The sooner the better, Carter, in my opinion," replied the other. "It could be done when the letter is delivered."

"I know that, Holden, but that's much too soon. It's not going to be done until I can put bracelets on every crook engaged in this job," Nick declared, with grim determination.

"I agree with you that that would be still better," smiled Holden, turning to hasten out with the fateful letter—for such it proved to be.

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER'S PLANS.

Starting with a fine spun thread, a mere film that only one man in a million would have picked up under such circumstances, Nick Carter had gradually twisted it to the size of a cord of considerable strength, of which he now aimed to make a rope with which to twist, perhaps, the necks of the culprits deserving it.

It was after two o'clock when Nick, still in disguise and in company with Chick, left the Shelby post office.

Three o'clock found them seated with Judge Barclay and President Burdick, of the S. & O. Railway, in the magnate's private office, to both of whom Nick had stated his discoveries and suspicions.

It was then that he picked up another strand for the rope.

He learned from President Burdick that an express shipment of sixty thousand dollars in currency and specie was to be made from Philadelphia that day, for the pay-roll and construction expense on the Shelbyville branch road, then being built; which had aroused the bitter and vengeful opposition of a lawless section of the country through which it was to pass, resulting in the numerous crimes and outrages to which the road since had been subjected, and the perpetrators of which Nick and his assistants had been employed to run down.

"This proves to be about what I suspected," Nick remarked, after hearing Burdick's statements. "We are up against some of the same bandits guilty of the previous crimes. I was not sure of it in the case of Jim Reardon, who had a personal grievance, or a fancied one, to avenge."

"It is not too late to cancel the shipment, Carter, or defer it for a few days," Judge Barclay suggested.

"That should be done, I think," Burdick added.

But Nick Carter quickly objected.

"By no means," he declared. "That is the worst step you could take."

"Why so?"

"Because we now have an unusual advantage over these rascals, in that we have anticipated their designs, and now is the time to catch them red-handed."

"Surely," Chick agreed. "It's a rare opportunity. It is one that should not be lost."

"There is something in that, Carter, after all," Burdick thoughtfully admitted. "We can easily protect the shipment by concealing a posse of well-armed men in the express car. How will that do?"

"It won't do at all," Nick replied. "The crooks might discover the fact and throw up the job. They are not working blindly, Mr. Burdick, nor in the dark. Being absolutely ignorant of their identity, moreover, you might reveal your intentions to some man who would betray you. You must leave this matter entirely to me. I want the rascals to undertake the job. I'll be on hand to prevent it."

"You may safely depend on him, Burdick," put in Judge Barclay.

"What are your plans, Mr. Carter?" President Burdick inquired.

"I don't know," Nick said frankly. "I have not laid any plans, nor shall I until I get all of the information I can obtain. All I want of you, Mr. Burdick, is to answer a few questions for me. I then will do the rest."

"Very well. I will leave it to you, then."

"You will make no mistake," Nick confidently predicted. "Now, to begin with, how is the money to be shipped? It will be in the express car, I infer."

"Yes, certainly, locked in the safe."

"Who has charge of the car?"

"A man named Daniel Cady."

"Reliable?"

"Until the last gun is fired," said Burdick emphatically. "I know him root and branch, Carter, and he has both judgment and courage. He would fight to the last ditch."

"Does he run alone on the car?"

"Yes. The night run does not ordinarily require a second man. The express carriage on that particular train is never very heavy. Cady has had charge of that car for a dozen years."

"Where does he live?"

"His home is here, in Shelby. He has a wife and several children. He now is in Philadelphia, however, for he goes and returns on alternate nights."

"Very good," said Nick. "What time is the express due in North Dayton?"

"Twelve o'clock precisely."

"Does it stop there?"

"Not at the station. It stops at the junction of our western division south of the town to take water and get instructions from Sampson, the train dispatcher here in Shelby. It is the last stop the limited makes before reaching Shelby."

"A run of eighteen miles, isn't it?"

"Nearly that."

"What is the next stop north?"

"Amherst, fourteen miles beyond North Dayton."

"There is a block-signal tower at the North Dayton Junction, I infer."

"Yes, certainly."

"Who is the night operator?"

"Tom Denny, a very reliable man."

"Capital!" said Nick promptly. "Write a line introducing me to Denny and directing him to coöperate with me. I shall require nothing, President Burdick, that will interfere with his customary duties."

"I will give you a letter to him."

"Also one to Daniel Cady," added Nick. "Make it of the same character. I am probably a stranger to both men."

President Burdick turned to his desk and wrote the two letters, then handed them to the detective.

"I think that is all," said Nick, taking his hat. "By the way, however, what time does the next north-bound train leave Shelby?"

"At five-thirty."

"Does it stop at North Dayton and Amherst?"

"Yes, both stations."

"That's all," Nick repeated, rising. "Do absolutely nothing more in this matter, gentlemen, but leave it all to me. I will contrive to thwart these rascals and land them behind prison bars. Come, Chick, we must get a move on."

"What's your scheme?" Chick inquired, when they emerged up the street.

"That can be briefly told," Nick replied. "Martin, whoever he is, evidently is in Philadelphia, where he probably learned about the money shipment and most likely he was there with that object in view. It is almost a safe gamble, too, that he will be on the Southern Limited tonight, since his letter to Dewitt states that he will see the latter after the robbery."

"I agree with you," Chick nodded. "It does look, indeed, as if he would be on the train."

"What part he will play in the robbery, however, is an open question," said Nick. "He may take no active part in it, as far as that goes, but may leave the work to his confederates."

"Possibly."

"We have, of course, no idea just when, where, or how the job will be attempted," Nick continued. "The letter states, however, that there will be nothing doing until the train is south of North Dayton."

"I remember."

"The job will be undertaken, then, somewhere in the run of eighteen miles to Shelby."

"Surely."

"Thinking they have a walk-over, as Martin terms it, the rascals may be overconfident," Nick added. "I think we can foil them, however, and get them with hands up. I will leave Patsy to trail Dewitt to cover, if possible, while we tackle the train end of the job."

"But what do you make of the other statements in Martin's letter?" Chick inquired.

"As to having a substitute down fine by that time and the other dead to rights?"

"Yes. What do you make of that?"

"That seems open to only one interpretation," Nick reasoned. "It probably refers to the package containing the money. A substitute evidently is to be used in some way, and the other taken from the express car."

"That seems like a reasonable theory."

"The money certainly is to be on the car, however, for Dewitt is directed to be on hand to relieve some one of the goods, possibly Martin himself."

"Very likely."

"But, as the letter also states, nothing is to be done until after leaving North Dayton," Nick repeated.

"And your plans?"

"We will leave town in disguise at five-thirty. You go as far as Amherst, to board the express when it arrives. You must be governed by the make-up of the train as to what car you will take. Select that which Martin would be most likely to occupy, and be on the lookout for him, or for any other suspicious circumstances. There is a fourteen-mile run before you arrive in North Dayton."

"I understand, Nick, and will be governed accordingly," Chick assured him. "But what are your own designs?"

"I'm going to board that express car at North Dayton," said Nick, with rather grim intonation. "I'll contrive to do so in a way that will occasion no misgivings, even if I am seen by some of the gang."

"And then?"

"Predictions beyond that point would be speculative.

I will make only one. If Cady proves to be the man of nerve and courage ascribed to him by President Burdick—well, in that case, Chick, if this bunch of bandits gets away with the money, I'll chuck my vocation and open an old man's home."

Chick Carter laughed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REAL SUBSTITUTE.

It was a clear night with a myriad of stars in the sky. The silver crescent of a quarter moon had sunk below the wooded hills in the west. A chill from the distant mountains was in the air, though but little wind was stirring.

The midnight stillness of the rural country south of North Dayton, where the lofty signal tower loomed up at the junction of the western division of the S. & O. Railway, was broken only by the frequent croakings of frogs in a swamp east of the tracks, or the occasional cry of some night bird circling overhead.

The N. D. tower, as it was known on the wire, was in a lonely locality. Trains stopped there only for water, or in response to the signal lights, which changed from green and red to white when the night operator, Tom Denny, worked the huge levers in the tower chamber.

He was seated at his telegraph stand shortly before twelve on that eventful night, a compact, muscular man of middle age. A revolver was lying near the instrument.

The murder in the K. C. tower at Shelby, the brutal killing of Karl Glidden, also the other crimes and the outrages along the S. & O. road—all were so fresh in the mind of every night operator during his weary vigil, that none was taking any chances of being caught unprepared.

Three bells suddenly broke the stillness of the tower chamber. They told Denny that the operator in the next tower north was waiting for his unlock, that the Southern Limited was approaching North Dayton, and Denny pushed the plug into the box and held it for an O. K. Getting it almost instantly, he arose and set his signals.

As he turned from the lever, he heard a step on the tower stairs. As quick as a flesh, while a hand was laid on the knob of the door, Denny stepped to the table and seized his revolver.

The door was opened and a roughly clad, bearded man appeared on the threshold. He looked like a track hand, or one employed on the railway. He was a stranger to Denny, however, who covered him instantly, crying sharply:

"Hold on! Stop right there! What do you want?"

Nick Carter smiled and said quietly:

"A few words with you, Denny, nothing more. I have a letter of introduction from President Burdick. It will tell you who I am and why I am here."

Denny appeared incredulous and suspicious.

"Stay where you are!" he commanded. "Toss me the letter, then hands up while I read it."

Nick obeyed, remarking, with a laugh:

"You're all right, Denny. He will be a good man, indeed, who catches you napping."

Denny read the brief letter, all the while with one eye upon the intruder. He had no doubt of Nick's identity, however, after reading the missive and seeing the familiar handwriting of the railway president.

"By Jove, you gave me a disagreeable surprise to start with, Mr. Carter, but this more than makes up for it," he said heartily, placing the letter and weapon upon the table and extending his hand.

"Good enough," Nick replied, entering and shaking hands with him.

"I can, indeed, guess why you are here," Denny added. "It is something in connection with your efforts to run down the railway bandits. I at first thought you were one of them."

"Quite naturally, Denny, I'm sure," smiled the detective. "I know you are in the employ of the road, of course, since you cornered Jim Reardon and sent him after his victim. But what's your mission here to-night? How can I be of any help to you?"

Nick knew that he could safely confide in him, and he then briefly informed him of the circumstances and of the steps he was taking to prevent the suspected robbery.

"I wish to board the express car without incurring suspicions, Denny, in case any of the gang are on the watch during this last stop of the train, before the job is to be attempted," Nick proceeded to explain. "I can do so, all right, by pretending to be a track hand and in the employ of the road. No observer seeing me come down from the signal tower would think it strange for me to board the car as if to ride to Shelby."

"Surely not," Denny quickly agreed. "That frequently occurs. You look the part to the letter, too, Mr. Carter."

"I wish to be with Cady in the car during the run," Nick added. "I will, I think, show these bandits that their knavery will be far from a walk-over."

"No doubt," said Denny, smiling. "You'll find Cady all right, too, and game to the core. He's one man in a thousand."

"So Burdick informed me."

"No one has anything on Cady."

"Can you consistently leave the tower after the train arrives?"

"Yes, indeed, while the engine is taking water. I nearly always have dispatches to take down."

"Capital! Go down with me to the express car, then, and pretend that you know me to be a track hand and that I have a right to ride with Cady. I wish to get into the car without any display of opposition on his part."

"I'll fix you, Mr. Carter, as far as that goes."

"And that is all I will require of you," said Nick. "I will explain to Cady after the train leaves here. How soon is it due?"

"In about five minutes," said Denny, glancing at a clock on the wall. "I'll slip on my coat and be ready to go down with you.

"Very good," Nick said approvingly. "Pay no attention to any persons who may be on the platform, or step from the train during the stop. An inquisitive stare might cause misgivings."

"I'm wise, Mr. Carter," Denny assured him. "I'll do precisely as if I knew nothing about this deviltry. I'm over seven, you know, and——"

He was interrupted by the sudden, rapid ticking of the telegraph instrument. It proved to be a dispatch for the engineer of the coming train, and Denny scarce had transcribed it when the whistle of the locomotive sounded in the near distance.

Half a minute later the glare of its headlight appeared amid the scattered lights of the town, from which it emerged at high speed and immediately began slowing down to make the junction.

"Come on!" Denny cried, leading the way. "She stops only five minutes."

Nick followed him from the chamber and down the long flight of stairs from the tower. He could feel the structure trembling under the vibrations caused by the heavy train, which then was approaching the long platform and coming to a stop, amid the clanging of the locomotive bell, the furious hissing of steam, and the grinding of the brakes.

Only a solitary man was pacing the platform, carrying a traveler's grip and a light overcoat. Nick saw at a glance that he was a commercial drummer and not worthy of suspicion.

Several men stepped from the train, obviously to break the monotony of a night journey, but neither the looks or actions of any appeared suspicious. Nick quickly noted the make-up of the train, a baggage car, the express car, a smoker, an ordinary passenger car, and two Pullman sleepers in the rear. He knew that Chick was on the train, but he did not know just where, nor particularly care at that moment.

Denny ran to the locomotive and gave the engineer the dispatch, then hurriedly rejoined Nick and led the way to the express car.

The sliding side door was thrown open from within while they approached, and Denny quickly greeted the man who appeared in the brightly lighted car.

"Hello, Cady, old chap!" he exclaimed. "You're right on time to-night, all right. Here's Jack Dakin, track hand, who will ride with you to Shelby. He missed the last local. You don't know him, I reckon, but he's all right."

"Ride with me?" questioned Cady, sharply regarding both.

He was a well-built man of middle age, of sandy complexion, and wearing a full beard. He was clad in blouse and overalls, with a woolen cap pulled over his brow.

Nick did not wait for him to make any objections. He grasped the edge of the door and drew himself up from the platform, saying quietly, while he entered the car:

"It's all right, Cady. I've got a letter to you from President Burdick. Don't oppose me. Pretend this is nothing unusual."

Cady seemed to grasp the situation. A fiery gleam appeared for a moment in the depths of his gray eyes, but he drew back to make room for Nick, replying, in quick whispers:

"What's up? There's nothing wrong, is there?"

"Wait until we leave here. Don't question," cautioned Nick.

"It's all right, Cady," Denny quickly assured him, leaning in through the open door.

"Good enough, then," Cady nodded. "I'll take your word for it, Tom."

Nick had strode across the car and seated himself on a packing case, one of several that evidently had been shipped by express and which occupied one side of the car. He noticed that the door of a safe in one corner was closed, and the handle indicated that the safe was properly locked and the combination scattered. He felt reasonably sure that he could, with the help of Dan Cady and Chick, foil and arrest any gang that would attempt the robbery.

The clanging of the locomotive bell told that the train was about to start.

Passengers on the platform scampered toward the cars from which they had emerged.

"So long, Cady!" cried Denny, while he hastened toward the tower stairs.

Cady responded with a gesture and then closed and secured the door of the express car.

A backward jolt, a jangling of bumpers and couplings, a furious hissing of steam, followed by the labored puffing of the locomotive, and the train made way and the lonely junction with its platform and the signal tower were quickly left behind, grim and silent in the twilight of the starry night.

Nick Carter then lost no time in explaining the situation, the outcome of which was far from what he expected, yet what no mortal man could have anticipated.

"Now, Cady, I'll put you wise to what's in the wind," said he, rising from the case on which he was seated. "Here is the letter from President Burdick that will tell you who I am, and a word will explain why I am here."

Cady opened the letter and read it, then gazed more sharply at the detective.

"Well, say, this is some surprise," he said bluntly. "I did not dream that you were Nick Carter, though I knew you were in the employ of the road. Do you suspect something wrong to-night, Mr. Carter, that you have boarded my car in this way?"

"More than suspect," Nick replied. "You are carrying a money package of sixty thousand dollars, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Carter, I am."

"Where is it?"

"Locked in the safe, sir, of course."

"Very good," Nick nodded. "It will be up to you and me, Cady, to prevent a bunch of bandits from removing it from the safe. Not only to prevent them, Cady, but also to corner and arrest them. Are you game for such an undertaking?"

Cady continued to look Nick straight in the eye.

"Game, sir!" he exclaimed. "You bet I'm game. If they get that money, Mr. Carter, they'll get it over my dead body. But why do you suspect anything of the kind?"

Nick briefly informed him, and the bearded face of the express-car man took on a more serious expression.

"So you got wise to all that from the two telegrams?" he said inquiringly.

"Exactly," Nick nodded.

"You're a keen man, Mr. Carter."

"Not at all, Mr. Cady. It's a part of my business to detect such things when they come my way."

"What other steps have you taken to prevent this job?"

"None of importance," Nick said evasively. "I think that you and I, Cady, will be able to prevent it."

"Sure, sir, as far as that goes," Cady quickly agreed. "Do you know just where and how it is to be attempted?"

"Not how, Cady, but somewhere between here and Shelby."

"We have not long to wait, then," Cady declared. "We make the run from North Dayton in twenty-six minutes."

"Where are we now?"

"We have covered about eight miles. We are in Willow Creek section, a mighty lonely locality, and the next place near which we pass is Benton Corners."

"Benton Corners!" Nick echoed. "That's where I rounded up Jim Reardon, and where Jake Hanlon, Link Magee, and Dick Bryan live. I suspected them of having been Reardon's confederates, but we could not convict them. It may be, by Jove, that they are engaged in this job."

"Quite likely. They certainly are bad eggs."

"You know them, then?"

"By name and sight," Cady nodded. "But we'll be ready for them. You are armed, sir, of course, and I have a revolver in the safe. I'll get it and——"

"No, no, don't unlock the safe," Nick quickly objected. "The job may be attempted at any moment. I have two revolvers. Take one of them and be ready to hold up the rascals."

"I'll be ready," Cady declared, taking the weapon. "Throw up your hands, Carter, and be darned quick about it, or you'll get a slug of lead from your own weapon."

Nick Carter was never more surprised in his life.

Cady had turned the revolver squarely upon the detective, and there was a gleam in his eyes, a vicious ring in his voice, denoting that he meant what he said.

No sane man would have ignored them, and Nick threw up his hands. They stood confronting one another in the swaying car, these two men, Cady with a murderous look on his bearded face, the detective with an expression of sudden terrible sternness, mingled with surprise.

"What's this, Cady?" he demanded. "I was told that you were true blue and a man of courage."

"You don't want to believe all you're told," Cady snarled back at him. "Don't drop your hands, Carter, or I'll drop you."

"Are you in with this gang?" Nick sternly questioned.

"You bet I'm in with it. I'm out to get this coin—and to get you, now, since you know so much about——"

The car lurched suddenly on a curve.

The revolver covering the detective's breast deviated for a moment, as Cady swayed under the sudden lurch.

It was the moment for which Nick Carter was watching. He was as quick as a flash in seeing and seizing the opportunity. His left hand shot downward and grasped the miscreant's wrist, turning the revolver aside, while his right shot out and closed with a viselike grip around Cady's neck.

"In with this gang, are you?" he shouted. "You shall pay the price, then."

But again the unexpected occurred. Another lurch of the car threw both men, then engaged in the terrible struggle, against the wall of the car.

Cady's beard was torn off and the truth revealed—the man was not Cady.

It was not a substitute package to which the telegram had referred, but—a substitute man!

Something like a half-smothered oath broke from the detective. He swung the struggling ruffian around and forced him against the wall of the swaying car. He could have overcome him and crushed him within half a minute—if help had not been at hand.

All transpired, in fact, in far less time than half a minute.

The covers of two of the packing cases flew upward.

Out of each case leaped a man.

A bludgeon in the hand of one fell squarely on Nick's head.

The fist of the other caught him on the jaw.

A blow from the supposed Cady landed over his heart.

And under this combined assault, made with all the vicious energy of utter desperation, Nick Carter sank to the floor of the reeling car, bleeding and insensible, with every muscle relaxed.

CHAPTER V.

NIGHT WORK.

Chick Carter, in accord with the plans laid out by Nick, was in Amherst that evening in the disguise of a traveling salesman. He was waiting on the station platform when the Southern Limited arrived.

Chick sized up the train as it rolled into the station. He did not definitely know, of course, whether the crook who had sent the telegram from Philadelphia was among the passengers, but he strongly suspected that he was, and he also knew that Nick would board the express car at North Dayton.

"If the crook is on the train and intends to take any active part in the robbery, it's ten to one that he is in the ordinary passenger car," Chick reasoned. "He certainly would not be in a sleeper. He would reason, too, that he would be less liable to suspicion than if he rode in the smoker."

Chick acted upon these theories. He entered the next car back of the smoker, the latter being back of the express and baggage cars, and he took one of the rear seats, from which he could see most of the other occupants of the car. It was about two-thirds filled with men and women, traveling singly or in couples.

Chick pretended to have no interest in any of them. None, nevertheless, escaped his furtive scrutiny during the run of fourteen miles to North Dayton. He could discover none, however, whose looks or actions seemed to warrant suspicion.

Twenty minutes took the train to North Dayton.

Gazing furtively from the window, Chick saw the lights in the signal tower, saw Nick and Denny hasten down the stairs, saw Denny return alone just as the train was starting, which convinced him that Nick then was in the express car, as planned.

Two men who had briefly left the train returned to the car in which Chick was seated. He was a keen reader of faces. He saw plainly enough that neither of the men was a crook, or at least no such crook as he was seeking.

The train rushed on through the starry night.

Chick knew that the time was rapidly approaching when, if Nick's deductions were correct, the robbery would be attempted.

"I'll not cut much ice here," he said to himself, at length. "I think I'll take a look at the occupants of the smoker. That will bring me nearer the express car."

He was about to do so when his attention was drawn to a couple three seats in front of him and on the opposite side of the aisle.

One was a respectable-looking, well-dressed man of forty, with grave, dark eyes and a Vandyke beard.

His companion was an attractive woman of about thirty

years old, with a fair complexion and an abundance of light brown hair. Her fine figure was clad in a tailor-made traveling costume of bottle green. They were about the last couple in the car to have invited suspicion.

The train had begun to labor on a steep up grade.

The man with a Vandyke beard drew out a cigar and bit the end from it, then said a few words to the woman. She bowed and smiled, revealing a double row of white teeth, and the man arose with a backward glance and smiled at her, then went into the smoker.

Chick watched him thoughtfully, but not suspiciously, when he strode through the aisle and out of the car. Plainly enough, it appeared, the man had excused himself politely to his companion in order to go for a smoke. It appeared like the act of a gentleman.

Chick felt no immediate impulse to follow him, and his attention was again drawn toward the woman. She was moving to a position nearer the lamps, and was spreading a newspaper, to read it.

Chick saw that it was a Philadelphia newspaper.

"By Jove, they evidently came from Philadelphia," he said to himself. "Can it be that they—no, no, that seems quite improbable. No man engaged in a train robbery, or with any interest in one, would be traveling with a woman. Besides, neither looks like a crook, but quite the contrary. She may have bought the paper on the train, or——"

Chick's train of thought took a sudden, startling turn.

A brakeman went rushing through the aisle in the direction of the smoking car.

Chick noticed now that the train was rapidly slowing down. He heard shouts from the smoker when the brakeman opened the door.

"Great guns!" he muttered, starting up and following him. "Has the trick been turned? Has the job been done, in spite of us?"

Chick hurried through the car and entered the smoker. A dozen excited men were gathered near the forward door and upon the platform and steps. In another moment Chick was among them, and he saw at a glance what had occurred.

The train had been divided. The rear cars of it had come to a stop on the steep up grade.

The forward section, consisting of the locomotive, the baggage car, and the express car, was vanishing around a curve in the tracks more than half a mile away.

A solitary man then was on the rear platform of the express car, though invisible in the darkness—the man with a Vandyke beard.

Scarce two minutes had elapsed since he passed through the smoker. He had not sat down, nor lighted his cigar, but walked deliberately out upon the front platform.

Then, with the speed and dexterity of one familiar with such work, he disconnected the signal cord and the air-brake couplings, set the front brake of the smoker, and then unlocked and threw the lever that uncoupled the two cars. Then he leaped to the back platform of the express car just as it forged ahead, leaving the rear section of the broken train falling swiftly behind.

Leaning out from the platform steps to make absolutely sure of his location, the man then waited until the forward section struck the curve mentioned. He then seized the bell cord and signaled the engineer to stop.

The response was immediate. Almost on the instant the grinding of the brakes was mingled with the roar and rumble of the wheels and the rush of the night wind around him.

Gazing toward the desolate wooded country on the right, he saw that he had timed the desperate work to a nicety.

Three quick flashes of light met his gaze, coming from a point in the woods scarce twenty feet from the railway. He turned and banged twice on the car door with the butt of his revolver.

The three men within were awaiting the signal. The sliding door of the car then was opened. So was the door of the safe. A large leather bag, nearly as large as a letter pouch, was lying on the floor.

Near by, gagged and securely bound, lay Nick Carter, still insensible. One of his assailants of (only a few minutes before, now hearing the expected signal, yelled excitedly:

"Out with him, Mauler! The roadbed is sandy. Out with him."

"Sandy be hanged!" shouted Mauler, the miscreant who had impersonated Cady. "It may be lucky for us if his neck is broken."

He rolled the detective's inanimate form from the car while speaking, and it vanished into the gloom outside.

The large leather pouch quickly followed.

The car was steadily slowing down.

There was a bang on the front door—but the door was locked and barricaded.

One after another of three men leaped from the car. The man on the rear platform sprang down and joined them.

They ran back over the roadbed, while the deserted car surged onward for nearly fifty yards before stopping, before the engineer and baggage hands began a more active and energetic investigation.

The four men then were a hundred yards down the track, invisible in the faint starlight at that distance. Other figures appeared from amid the gloomy woods. The burdens lying on the roadbed, one more than the scoundrels had figured upon, were quickly seized and removed—into the depths of the forest that flanked the railway for miles in that locality.

Much can be quickly accomplished by determined men under such desperate circumstances.

Only eight minutes had passed since the Southern Limited had left North Dayton.

Something like three minutes later, Chick Carter, followed by half a score of men anxious to learn what had occurred, came running up the track and joined the engineer and other train hands then gathered in and around the looted express car.

Chick saw at a glance that the trick had, indeed, been turned; also that Nick Carter was missing.

"Great guns!" he exclaimed to himself. "This is strange, mighty strange, and where in thunder is Cady?"

Chick decided to listen briefly before revealing his identity and what he knew about the case, a self-restraint which few would have had under such circumstances, and he very soon determined to say nothing.

For the engineer and train hands, familiar with the desolate section of the country, quickly came to two conclusions; one, that Cady had been overcome by the robbers who had been concealed in the empty packing cases; the other, that he had been carried away with the

plunder from the open safe by a gang of desperadoes whom it would be useless to pursue at that time.

Chick knew that they were mistaken, and he also felt sure that he could accomplish nothing then and there. The evidence in the car showed him plain enough that Nick had been overcome by the bandits, and he realized that any attempt at immediate pursuit would be worse than futile.

He sprang into the express car, when the conductor insisted that he must run on to Shelby, and the cars were first run back to couple on the rear section of the broken train.

Chick returned to his seat in the car which he had occupied from Amherst.

The blond woman, apparently wearied by the delay, and with no interest in the occasion for it, seemed to have fallen asleep over her newspaper.

Chick Carter noticed her again soon after resuming his seat, and he was suddenly hit with an idea.

"By thunder!" he mentally exclaimed. "What has become of her companion? Can he have been in the smoker all the while? No, not by a long chalk! He would not have left her here asleep, if she really is asleep. He would have returned to tell her about the robbery."

"Humph! there's nothing to this," he abruptly decided. "I have had that Philadelphia crook under my very eye, this woman's companion, the fellow with a Vandyke beard. He must have bolted with the gang, too, or I should have seen him on the railway, or in the smoker. All this will be a cinch, by Jove, unless he shows up before we reach Shelby. I'm glad I kept my trap closed. My identity is not suspected, and I will have a clew worth following—the woman!"

Presently, moving from side to side, selecting such persons as hit his fancy, the conductor came through the car and took the names and addresses of several people, explaining that witnesses might be wanted in a later investigation, who were not in the employ of the railway company.

The woman was among those whom he questioned. She yawned and looked up at him with a frown.

"Pardon me," she declined, a bit curtly. "I do not wish to be brought into an investigation."

"It may not be necessary, after all," said the conductor suavely.

"But I know nothing about the affair, except that the train stopped and that a robbery is said to have been committed," the woman objected. "Besides, my home is in Philadelphia, and it would not be convenient for me to be summoned to an investigation."

"You would be excused, no doubt, in that case," persisted the conductor. "Surely, madam, you have no other reason for refusing to give me your name and address."

"No other reason!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Certainly not, sir!"

"Kindly do so, then."

The woman hesitated for another moment.

"By Jove, she is deciding whether to give him a fictitious name," thought Chick, intently watching her frowning face. "She'll not be fool enough to do so."

Chick was right.

The woman decided nearly as quickly as he that deception at that time might later make her liable to serious suspicion. She drew herself up a bit haughtily and said:

"Very well, then, since you insist upon it. My name is Janet Payson."

"Thank you," smiled the conductor. "And your address?"

"No. 20 Martin Street, Philadelphia."

The conductor bowed and moved on.

"Martin Street," thought Chick, instantly recalling the signature on the Dalton telegram. "Martin fits in here, all right. She told the truth, and I've picked up a very proper lead. It's not such a long, long way to Tipperary, after all. We shall see."

The woman left the train at Shelby, carrying only a suit case, and she accosted a cabman outside of the station.

"Shelby House," she directed curtly.

Chick was at her elbow and heard her.

Ten minutes later he read her name inscribed on the hotel register: "Miss Janet Payson, Philadelphia."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW PATSY MADE GOOD.

It was one o'clock when Chick Carter entered his room in the Shelby House. He removed his coat, hat, and disguise, then lit a cigar and sat down to size up the circumstances and the evidence he had found in the express car.

How was the robbery committed? How did Cady figure in it, and what became of him? How had Nick been overcome, and why had he been carried away by the bandits, assuming that he had not been killed and thrown from the car?

Chick did not believe the last. He would have seen the body when hastening up the tracks. He knew that these crooks would commit murder only as a last resort, moreover, and the evidence in the car did not point to bloodshed and murder.

Chick felt reasonably sure, in fact, that Nick was alive and in the hands of the desperadoes.

"Two empty packing cases and an open safe, opened by means of the combination," he mused intently. "No force apparent except what must have been required to get the best of Nick and Cady. But could two men concealed in packing cases, and the cases could not have contained more than two, have overcome two such men as Nick and Cady? By Jove, it doesn't seem possible.

"Nor could Janet Payson's companion have had any hand in the work done in the express car. He would have had time only to disconnect the train, which he certainly went forward to do. All that was cut and dried, previously planned, and it was done by a man expert at such work.

"Is it possible, then, that Cady is in league with these crooks? Did he hold up Nick and get him with the help of his hidden confederates? Did he open the safe? Did he substitute—stop one moment! By Jove, there was no substitute money package in the car, nor in the safe, or I must surely have seen it. I made a thorough inspection."

Chick's brows knit closer under the mental concentration with which he strove to fathom the conflicting circumstances.

"That special-delivery letter certainly mentioned a substitute. It read, I remember distinctly: 'We'll have the

substitute down fine in ample time and the other dead to rights.'

"H'm, that's not so clear, in view of what has occurred and the fact that no substitute money package was found in the car. It certainly is worded a bit oddly. To have one dead to rights is a term usually applied to a situation, a gang, or a man; not to a parcel, package, or anything of that kind.

"By Jove, it may in this case have been a man. The substitute may have been a man in place of Cady. That would explain Cady's disappearance from the car. A man made up to perfectly resemble Cady—that's it, by gracious, as sure as I'm a foot high," Chick decided. "That's why Martin worded the letter in that way, that he'd have a substitute down fine, in ample time. A substitute to take Cady's place in the express car—that's what!"

Chick's countenance had lighted. Through this process of reasoning he had deduced the one fact, the one crafty subterfuge, that had made the robbery possible under all of the other known circumstances.

It told Chick, too, how easily confederates of the substitute rascal could have been concealed in the car, and how easily Nick could have been held up and overcome under such unexpected adverse conditions.

"But what has become of Cady?" Chick next asked himself. "He was supposed to be in Philadelphia, of course, in order to make this run. By Jove, I have it! Got him dead to rights, eh? I'll see about that. I'll set another ball rolling in this game—one that may knock out a ten-strike."

Chick sprang up with the last and hastened down to the hotel office. Entering a telephone booth and closing the door, he called up the central exchange and learned that he could quickly get a clear wire to Philadelphia.

"I want the police headquarters," said he. "The officer in charge."

Chick had waited only seven minutes, when the operator rang him up and announced:

"All ready."

"Hello!" Chick called. "Police headquarters, Philadelphia?"

"Yes."

Distance did not serve to soften the strong, sonorous voice. The wire carried the sound perfectly. The voice was a familiar one to the detective, that of an old friend in police circles, and Chick laughed audibly.

"It's easy to recognize a voice that rings true," said he. "How are you, Lieutenant Lang?"

"Fine!" came the answer. "But who are you?"

"Chickering Carter."

"Oh, ho! Chick, eh?" Lang's sonorous laugh could be heard. "Glad to hear from you. Where are you?"

"On a case down Shelby way."

"I heard that Nick was in that section. Something doing?"

"Plenty, Lang, and then some."

"That just about suits you, I suppose. How can I aid you?"

"I want hurry-up information about a woman."

"What name?"

"Janet Payson."

"You'll not have to wait long," cried Lang, laughing. "I can supply you right off the reel."

"Good!" Chick cried. "Do you know her?"

"Only professionally," Lang responded. "She's pretty well known here by the boys in brass buttons."

"What about her, Ned?"

"Fly!" Lang said tersely. "As fly as one often meets."

"A crook?" Chick inquired.

"Crooked, but not a crook. I don't know that she has ever been arrested. She devotes her attractions to bleeding any easy mark that comes her way. She is known here as Jaunty Janet."

"I've got you," said Chick. "Do you know where she lives?"

"That's a fat question. What am I on the force for?" Lang cried, laughing. "She has a ground-floor flat in Martin Street, No. 20."

"Correct!" Chick exclaimed. "Do you know anything about her male friends?"

"No, nothing."

"Listen. I want you to do something for me."

"Come across with it, Chick, and consider it done."

"Telegraph me the result. Address me in care of the Shelby House."

"I will do so. What's wanted?"

Chick told him and returned to his room, at the door of which he now found—Patsy Garvan.

"Gee! I've been on nettles for an hour, ever since the Southern Limited arrived," Patsy impatiently declared, after greeting him. "I was at the station and heard about the robbery, but I saw nothing of you, or the chief, and I figured that you both were in wrong, for fair. What's become of the chief? I've been here twice in search of you. Couldn't you head off the job? What do you want for a starter? Why didn't you——"

"Cut it! Cut it!" Chick interrupted. "Bridle your tongue, or you'll ask more questions than I could answer before daylight. Hit up a cigar and give me time to explain. You're not all the mustard in the pot. Didn't you know that?"

"Sure I know it," retorted Patsy. "But I'm some mustard, all the same, with a dash of tabasco thrown in. What's eating you, anyway? Send for an ice bag and cool your block. Your hair may wilt with the heat and look like dead grass. You'd be a bird, then."

Chick laughed and lit another cigar.

It was two in the morning, mind you, and both had been busy and on their nerves for eighteen hours, a sufficient excuse for impatience and irritability, which really had no sting.

Patsy grinned and sat down, taking a brier pipe from his pocket and deliberately filling it. Not until he had lit it and wafted a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling did he speak again, and then he stared at Chick and said simply:

"Well?"

Chick settled back in his chair and told him what had occurred.

Patsy's face then had lost its sphinxlike expression.

"Gee whiz!" he commented. "Say, Chick, old top, this isn't so bad."

"Come on with it," Chip replied, knowing he had something to report. "What have you learned that's worth knowing?"

"Worth knowing—that's my long suit with four honors," said Patsy. "I never pick up thirteen measly duckers, no matter who deals the papes. Say, Chip, old chap, listen!"

"Listen, eh? What do you think I'm doing? Do I look like a lay figure with wax ears? I am listening."

Patsy ended his levity and drew up in his chair.

"You know whose trail I have been on—that of Gus Dewitt," he said earnestly. "I got the chief's telephone spiel from the post office, which put me wise to what that special-delivery letter contained, and that was the last I knew of his suspicions and designs. But I had my eye on Dewitt, all right, and I saw him receive the letter and read it."

"And then?" questioned Chick.

"He then made a move that nearly shook me off his track," Patsy continued. "He bolted straight for the stable back of the Reddy House. He had a horse out there tied under a shed, and he mounted him without a word to any one and rode out of town as if a dozen devil's imps were after him."

"You knew why he went, of course."

"Sure thing, Chick, since I knew what was in the letter. I knew he had gone to notify the gang that the job was to be done to-night."

"Certainly," Chick nodded. "There was nothing else to it."

"There was enough more to it to keep me on the go until nearly dark," Patsy protested. "It was up to me to trail him, wasn't it?"

"Sure," Chick smiled. "I admit that."

"Well, it didn't prove to be soft walking," Patsy resumed. "I got next to the hostler, two stable hands, and a chauffeur, who hang around there, but they didn't know him from a side of leather, except that his name was Gus Dewitt and that he occasionally rode into town for a day or an evening."

"I see."

"Then a cabby showed up who remembered having seen him ride in one night with Jake Hanlon, at whose place we cornered Jim Reardon for the Glidden murder."

"At Benton Corners."

"Sure," nodded Patsy. "That, of course, put a bee in my bonnet. I reasoned that, if Dewitt and Hanlon were friends, both might be in this job, as well as those two thoroughbred rascals who hang out at Hanlon's place, Dick Bryan, and Link Magee."

"Quite likely, Patsy," Chick agreed.

"I reckoned, too, that Dewitt was heading for Benton Corners, since he had taken that direction."

"You went out there?"

"I decided to take that chance, for I could see no other way of trailing him. As I was leaving the stable yard, however, I noticed the tracks left by his horse's hoofs."

"What about them?"

"One had a little peculiarity."

"What was that?"

"The shoe on the off fore hoof was different from the others. It had a bar plate, and the mark of it showed plainly wherever it struck yielding soil."

"I follow you," Chick nodded.

"And I followed the tracks of that bar-plate shoe," said Patsy. "There were none in the paved streets, mind you, but I hustled out to the road leading to Benton Corners, and there I found the tracks again."

"Good work."

"Knowing I might be mistaken, however, if I assumed that Dewitt had gone to Hanlon's place, I decided to stick to my trail."

"A wise decision, Patsy."

"It took me some time to follow it, but it led me to Hanlon's place, all right, and, after watching from the woods back of the stable until late in the afternoon, I made a discovery."

"Yes?"

"Jake Hanlon showed up on horseback and rode into the stable, and Dick Bryan came from the house and joined him."

"But the discovery, Patsy?"

"Bryan had it in his hand," said Patsy dryly. "The special-delivery letter and the disguise he had worn as Gus Dewitt."

"Bryan and Dewitt are the same, eh?"

"Yes, and Dalton thrown in," declared Patsy. "Bryan has been posing in all three characters. He's a pretty slick gink at that, too, I judge, from the confidence with which he spoke when talking with Hanlon about it."

"You could hear what they were saying?"

"Only for a few moments. Bryan showed him the letter and the telegrams, and they then hurried into the house. Out they came in about ten minutes, however, both with revolvers and shotguns, and then they mounted their horses and rode off to the north."

"To join others of the gang, no doubt," said Chick.

"That's how I sized it up."

"Surely."

"Hanlon spoke of another crib, but he said nothing definite, and I knew only the direction they took," Patsy went on. "I felt pretty sure that you and the chief would head off the robbery, you see, so I hiked back to Shelby to hunt you up and report. Now, hang it, I learn that the job has been pulled off, and you think the chief is in the hands of the rascals."

"I have hardly a doubt of it," said Chick.

"It won't be easy, then, to corner this gang and recover their plunder," Patsy dubiously declared. "They'll know we are after them and——"

"But not what you have discovered," put in Chick pointedly.

"That's true. That may help some," Patsy allowed. "If we could only find out what other crib Hanlon meant and where it is located, and devise some way to get there before they can cover their tracks and dispose of Nick——"

"Stop a moment," Chick interrupted. "I think we can accomplish both."

"You do?" Patsy's countenance lighted.

"I certainly do. We'll put something over on these ruffians, Patsy, that will have failed to enter their heads. We'll get them, all right, take it from me."

"What do you mean? Explain."

"Pull up here and listen," said Chick, tossing away his cigar.

CHAPTER VII.

CHICK CARTER'S CUNNING.

Miss Janet Payson was seriously startled about ten o'clock the following morning, when a somewhat insistent knock sounded on the door of her apartments in the Shelby House.

The same was true of her companion, who had entered

about half an hour before, after leaving his touring car in a neighboring street, in charge of a chauffeur and another man, as if their mission was one that required at least a moderate degree of caution.

Janet Payson's companion was the man with a Vandyke beard—but he had removed it and slipped it into his pocket since entering.

The removal of the disguise did not improve him. It had served to hide a thin-lipped, sinister mouth, a bulldog jaw and chin, and the hard lines of a desperate and determined face.

That he was all that his face denoted, moreover, appeared in the celerity with which he whipped out a revolver from his hip pocket the instant the knock interrupted the subdued conversation with the woman. At the same time he muttered quickly:

"What's that? Who the devil can that be?"

Janet Payson turned pale, or as pale as the tinge of rouge in her cheeks permitted, and she laid her finger on her lips, then pointed to the adjoining bedroom.

"Keep quiet, Jeff," she whispered. "I'll find out."

The man, Jefferson Murdock by name, seized his hat and tiptoed into the bedroom and set the door ajar. Then he waited and listened, revolver in hand.

The knock sounded again on the hall door.

"Presently," cried the woman. "Who's there?"

She tore open the collar of her waist while speaking, receiving no reply, then stepped to the door and opened it.

"I had not finished dressing," she said impatiently, hastening to rehook the collar. "What do you want?"

Chick Carter was the person who had knocked, and none would have recognized him. Though fairly well clad and somewhat flashily, he had the sinister aspect of an East Side tough, or a man capable of any covert knavery.

Chick removed his hat and smiled, nevertheless replying as politely as one would have expected:

"I want to talk with you for half a minute, or mebbe longer, Miss Payson, if you're alone here."

"Talk with me?" said Janet, with brows knitting. "What about, and who are you?"

"My name is Kennedy, Jim Kennedy, and I live in Philadelphia," said Chick, dropping his voice suggestively. "I happened to be on the train last night when——"

"Wait! Stop a moment," Janet curtly interrupted, drawing back. "Step inside. I don't care to be seen talking with you. Close the door."

"Sure," Chick vouchsafed, with sinister intonation. "That hits me all right. It's just what I wanted. But none would think less of you for talking with me, as far as that goes—not much!"

There could be no mistaking such a beginning as this, and the woman's white face lost much of its beauty under the vicious scowl that settled upon it.

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded.

"You ought to know," said Chick.

"Well, I don't know," Janet retorted.

"Let it go at that, then. Take it for what it's worth."

"See here, you insolent——"

"Oh, cut that!" Chick interrupted, unruffled. "Don't go into the air, because I'm not handing you a pasteboard with my monaker on it. I don't happen to have one. I ain't a gink what carries his name pasted in his lid. My name is Kennedy, plain Jim Kennedy, and I've got a word to say to you on a little matter of business. That's why I'm here, Miss Payson."

Chick coolly took a chair while speaking, the same from which Murdock had just arisen. He noticed at once that both wooden arms of the chair were slightly warm, where the hands of some person had been recently resting on them. Though he already knew that the woman was not alone, having been watching her apartments since early morning, he looked up at her and quickly added:

"I've taken your chair, mebbe."

"No," she replied, pointing to one near her dressing stand. "I was sitting there. See here, Mr. Kennedy, what's the meaning of this visit? Come to the point."

She had appeared in doubt up to that time, uncertain what course to shape; but her voice and countenance now denoted that she anticipated what was coming, that she suspected the mission of her sinister visitor, and that she also felt fully equal to meeting the situation. She sat down quite abruptly and repeated:

"Come to the point. What do you want here?"

"That's quickly told," Chick replied. "It's about the little job that was pulled off last night."

"What job, Mr. Kennedy?"

"That train robbery. You know all about it."

"All about it!" Janet exclaimed. "What do you mean by that? I know nothing about it—except that there was a robbery."

"Oh, yes, you do," Chick insisted. "Nix on that. I happened to be on the train, and I'm wise to something that no other gazabo noticed."

"What was that?" she coldly questioned.

"There was a gink with you in the car who didn't show up after the robbery."

"What of that?"

"He quit you just before the trick was turned, and he didn't come back to you. He was no come-back kid," Chick declared. "He went through the smoker and uncoupled it from the express car. He was the gink who did the job, or one of the bunch—and you know it."

The woman heard him with hardly a change of countenance.

"You are very much mistaken," she said icily.

"About what?"

"My knowing anything about the robbery—or the man you mention."

"He was with you, wasn't he?"

"He sat with me, yes," Janet coldly admitted. "But that signifies nothing. There was no other vacant seat when he entered the car, so he sat with me, and we entered into conversation that did not end until he left me and went into the smoker. That's all I know about him, all I care about him. He was a total stranger to me."

Chick grinned derisively and shook his head.

"Say, do I look as if I'd swallow that?" he asked, with sinister contempt.

"You may swallow it, or not, as you like," Janet retorted, with apparent indifference.

"It might slip down the red lane of a country parson, but not down mine," Chick went on. "You see, Miss Payson, I haven't knocked round Quakertown all my life for nothing. I know all about you. I've seen you round town for years."

"Suppose you have," sneered Janet. "What of that?"

"Nothing of it, barring that I know all about you," Chick informed her, more impressively. "Your name is

Janet Payson, sometimes Jaunty Janet, and you live in a ground-floor flat in Martin Street. That's what. You see, I am onto your curves, and I'm here to knock out a homer. That's me!"

"See here——"

"Nix on the see-here gag!" Chick interrupted. "You wait till I've said my little verse. Then you can have your spiel and go as far as you like. You ain't any main dame in the social game. You're only the little casino in a soiled deck. Your word wouldn't go in a Quaker meetinghouse, say nothing of a criminal court. I know! I'm wise! You can't put nothing over on me."

"Well, what are you coming to?" scowled Janet, with the rouge glaring more vividly on her pale cheeks.

"That's right. That's more like it," Chick went on, with a sinister nod. "Now we're getting down to brass tacks. Pass up the grouch and let's talk business."

"Well?" snapped Janet.

"You know what I want. There was a slick job pulled off last night, and somebody has got sixty thousand bucks in his jeens. I want a bit of it."

"You do!" Janet sneered. "You'll take it out in wanting, then, as far as I'm concerned."

"Mebbe so, though I have a hunch that you'll change your mind," Chick retorted. "If you don't, it will be all over but the settling."

"What do you mean by settling?"

"You know what I mean, all right. Mebbe, though, you don't quite get me; I'll make it so plain that a blind monkey could see it in the dark. I'm out for the coin myself, you know, when I see a chance to lift any. I'd be a bird if I let this chance slip by."

"You mean——"

"I mean all I am saying," Chick cut in, with ominous mien. "Understand, though, I'm not a gink who would betray a pal. I wouldn't squeal on a friend if I was strung toes up. Not on your tintype. But I'm not a pal of yours, nor of any of the bunch. I wasn't in this job. I'm only looking to get in."

"You mean that you are here to blackmail me," snapped Janet. "Is that it?"

"Blackmail be hanged!" growled Chick derisively. "You can't blackmail an ink spot. You know what I want—and I'm going to have it."

"I'll know when you tell me," frowned the woman. "Not till then."

Chick jerked his chair nearer to that in which she was seated. There was, indeed, no mistaking his meaning, if one was to have judged from outward appearances. His hangdog face wore an expression that none could have misinterpreted.

"I'll tell you what I mean, all right," he replied, with more threatening intonation. "I want a bit of that coin and I'm going to have it. When I get it, I'll go about my business and keep my trap closed. I'll never squeal. I'll never yip till the day of judgment. You can bank on that, and bank on it good and strong."

"I can, eh?"

"That's what."

"And suppose you don't get it?" questioned Janet, with lowering gaze at him. "What then?"

"You'll get yours, instead."

"You mean, I take it, that you'll inform the police."

"That's just what I mean," Chick nodded. "Unless some one comes across with the coin, it's you for the caboose. I'll have a bull after you inside of half a minute. I'll tell all I know about the job and all I know about you. Your story wouldn't stand washing in distilled water. The gink with the Vandyke whiskers did the job, and you know it. I'll hand all this to the bulls, unless I get mine, and I'll lose no time about it. That's all. It's up to you, now. What d'ye say?"

"I say that you may go to the devil, Kennedy, and do your worst," snapped Janet, with eyes flashing. "I say ——"

"Stop a moment! Stop a moment!" cried Murdock, stepping into the room. "I reckon it's time for me to have my say—or this!"

Chick swung around in his chair and found himself gazing—into the black muzzle of a leveled revolver.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANGE OF BASE.

Chick Carter did not appear much disturbed by the threatening turn of the situation. He gazed at the weapon, then at the man, without stirring from his chair.

Murdock had not replaced his disguise. His dark-featured face wore a look as threatening as his weapon. He added coldly, nevertheless, while Janet Payson shrank back with a look of alarm:

"You keep quiet, Janet, and let me settle this fellow. I ought to let the gun do the talking, Kennedy, but I'm not going to. I only want to show you that I could turn you down on the spot, if I was so inclined."

Chick recognized the man in spite of his changed appearance, and he had known from the first that he was in Janet's apartments. He pretended to be surprised, however, and to have no idea that this was her companion of the previous night on the train. He drew up in his chair and replied, frowning darkly:

"You have got the drop on me, all right, but——"

"But I don't intend to take advantage of it," Murdock interrupted, thrusting the weapon into his pocket. "There is a better way and a less risky one to settle this business. I have heard all you said to this woman, Kennedy."

"She told me she was alone," growled Chick, with an ugly glance at her.

"No, she didn't," said Murdock, taking a chair. "You took it for granted. I heard all she said. That's neither here nor there, however. The question is, Kennedy, what do you really intend doing?"

"You heard what I said," replied Chick, with a defiant stare at him.

"You really mean it, do you?"

"That's what. I'm going to have my bit out of this job, or there's going to be something doing."

"You will tell all you know, eh?"

"That's about the size of it."

"But you can be bought?"

"Sure thing. That's what I'm here for."

"I see," said Murdock, with a nod. "But why does it devolve upon her to buy your silence? That's up to the person who committed the crime. Assuming that you are right, that the man you saw with her on the train had a hand in the robbery, she certainly played no part in it. It's hardly fair to ring her into it, or to ask her to buy your silence."

"I'm out for the coin, and I'm going to get it," Chick grimly insisted.

"Do you know the man, her companion?"

"No. But it's enough that she knows him, and——"

"Could you identify him?" Murdock interrupted.

"Sure I could. I saw him plain enough on the train."

Murdock smiled a bit oddly, sure that Chick did not suspect him of having been the crook. He took a cigar from his pocket and lit it, remarking carelessly:

"You're a bad egg, Kennedy, and you're serving this woman a scurvy trick. No more could be expected of a fellow of your cloth, I suppose, and I'm not sure but that would be the best way to settle with you."

"Sure it would!" Chick quickly agreed.

"See here, Jeff——"

"You keep quiet, Janet!" Murdock commanded. "It's plain enough that Kennedy cannot be bullied. You're in a mess, Janet, and I'm going to pull you out. Nevertheless, Kennedy, you must see that it's not up to this woman to settle," he added. "She had no hand in the job, even if your suspicions are correct. It's up to the man to buy your silence. As a matter of fact, too, she has no money with which to bribe you. Nor have I. You must see the man himself."

"Trot him out, then," Chick said bluntly. "He's the very gink I want to see. I'll bring him to time, all right, if I can get my lamps on him."

"It's not so easy to trot him out," Murdock replied. "He would have to trot a considerable distance."

"You mean he ain't in town?" questioned Chick, frowning suspiciously.

"Not within a dozen miles of Shelby."

"You know where he is, then, I take it."

Murdock nodded.

"I not only know where he is, Kennedy, but I'll take you to him," he said, after a moment. "He's the man for you to see, and I have no doubt that you can make some kind of a deal with him. He will conclude that's the best way out of the difficulty, most likely, providing your demands are not exorbitant."

"Oh, I don't want the earth," Chick allowed.

"It's up to you, then."

"What is?"

"To go with me and see him," said Murdock, in more friendly fashion. "I came in this morning to take Janet out there. You may go with us."

"There's a better way," Chick objected, grimly shaking his head.

"A better way?"

"Sure! Let him come here and see me."

"Don't be a fool, Kennedy," Murdock replied, with a growl. "He wouldn't take chances of coming into town. It would be all that his neck is worth to him."

"And it might be all that mine is worth to me, if I went where he is," Chick dryly asserted.

"What do you mean by that?"

"He might give it to me where the chicken got the ax."

"Turn you down? Is that what you mean?"

"That's what." Chick nodded. "I'm not taking that kind of a chance. Not for mine!"

Murdock laughed and shook his head.

"You'll take no chance at all, Kennedy, in going to see him," he replied, in assuring tones. "Neither he, nor any of his gang, would risk running their necks into a rope unless it was absolutely necessary."

"Wouldn't, eh?" queried Chick doubtfully.

"Certainly not," Murdock insisted. "And it wouldn't be necessary in this case. With the big wad of money acquired by the robbery, they'll be willing enough to settle for any ordinary sum, rather than take the risk of putting you away, even if so inclined."

"Mebbe so, after all," Chick demurred.

"I already have shown you, besides, that I could have turned you down on the spot, if I had wanted to," Murdock added. "But I wouldn't have a hand in that kind of a job. You'll take no risk, Kennedy, in going to see the man."

Chick was not blind to the trap that was being laid for him. He had expected no less, and had laid his own plans accordingly. He still pretended to have some misgivings, nevertheless, but asked, as if somewhat impressed:

"Where must I go to see him?"

"Up Willow Creek way," said Murdock indefinitely.

"Where's that?"

"Nearly a dozen miles from here."

"Is there a train?"

"You can do better than take a train. None runs very near the place, nor could you find it alone."

"What d'ye mean by better?" Chick demanded.

"I have the touring car that I came down in this morning," said Murdock. "I'm going to take Janet up there. You can ride with us."

"Say, is this on the level?" asked Chick, frowning. "If not, I'll blow the head off of some one."

Murdock laughed.

"You mean my head, of course," said he. "But you'll have no cause to do so, Kennedy, on my word. I'm giving it to you dead straight, and you'll take no risk in going with me."

"That settles it," Chick declared abruptly. "I'll go. Where is your car?"

"In the next street."

"Come on, then, and——"

"Wait!" Murdock interrupted. "We must wait for Janet."

"I'm ready, Jeff, all but my hat!" she cried, rising.

"Put it on, then, and we'll be off."

Chick waited, still with ominous and doubtful mien.

They left the hotel five minutes later, however, and Murdock led the way to the waiting car.

Chick hesitated again when he saw the chauffeur and another man in the conveyance, but Murdock said quickly, in a confidential way:

"That's only my chauffeur and one of the gang. You might do worse, Kennedy, than to join us."

"That would hit me all right," Chick said quickly.

"It could be arranged, I think."

"Go on, then. I'm with you."

Murdock introduced him to the two men—Dick Bryan and Link Magee, both in disguise.

Chick recognized both, but did not betray it. He shook hands with them, then took a seat in the tonneau, with Bryan and Murdock on either side of him, Janet riding in front, with the chauffeur.

Chick knew precisely what he was up against, and he went against it willingly.

Murdock thought he knew, also, but the game was deeper than he so much as suspected.

It was eleven o'clock when the touring car sped out of Shelby.

A quarter hour later it passed through the miserable settlement known as Benton Corners, the scene of previous arrests by the Carters, and its course then lay north, as Chick was expecting.

Others had passed that way since morning, however, several others, and then were waiting miles beyond to note the direction taken by this car at the only cross-road. They had traveled through the woods, and were waiting in the woods.

When Chick had ridden another mile, however, reaching a desolate part of the wooded foothills, the expected occurred. He felt Murdock suddenly seize his arm with a viselike grip, and a revolver was thrust under his nose.

"Now, Kennedy, you sit quiet," he cried. "You move a finger and you'll get all that's coming to you."

"What's this?" snarled Chick, shrinking. "You don't mean——"

"I mean what I say, blast you!" Murdock fiercely interrupted. "I've known you from the first. You are Chick Carter, the detective, and we're going to land you with your running mate. Get a rope on him, Bryan. Lend a hand here, Link, and make him fast. I'll send a bullet through him, if he shows fight, and that will end him. Be quick about it."

The rascals needed no second bidding, but their task did not prove difficult.

For this was precisely what Chick had been expecting, and he offered no resistance, though he met their threatening remarks with predictions at which the ruffians only laughed and sneered.

Half an hour later the car swerved out of the woodland road and entered a clearing. It surrounded an isolated, miserable old house, with a stable and numerous tumble-down outbuildings, the home of two members of the bandit gang, Solomon Mauler and his brother.

Chick Carter, then bound hand and foot, sized up the miserable place—but appeared to have no interest in its surroundings.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESULT OF THE RUSE.

It was in the miserable place, in part described, that Nick Carter awoke to a realization that something unexpected had befallen him. Returning consciousness brought a sense of cramped limbs and bruised muscles, the results of the blows he had received and the violence of his fall from the moving train, when Sol Mauler rudely rolled him from the express car.

The effect of all this was to leave Nick unconscious for several hours, how many he hardly knew when he finally revived.

He found himself lying on the floor of a stall in a miserable stable, bound hand and foot in a way that precluded liberating himself. He was sore, stiff, and scarce able to stir, but he could use his eyes and ears, and his brain soon became cleared of the cobwebs.

He could hear the movements of horses in the near stalls. He could see the sunlight through chinks in the walls of the old building. He knew that day had dawned, if not already well spent, for the early songs of birds in the trees through which he could hear the sweep of the wind had ceased, and he reasoned that the morning was far advanced.

All this was confirmed a little later, when the steps of approaching men fell upon his ears, and the broad door of the stable swung open on its rusty hinges. A blaze of sunlight was shed into the dismal building.

Two men strode in and around to the stall in which the detective was lying. They were Sol Mauler, who had impersonated Cady, and his brother—Zeke Mauler. Why they dwelt alone in that desolate region and how they earned their living was a mystery to many, but there were hints at moonshine whisky.

"I reckon he's still in dreamland, Zeke," Sol Mauler was saying, when they approached. "He was hardly breathing half an hour ago, when I fed the nags. Mebbe he'll croak on our hands and save us the trouble of—no, blast him! there he is with eyes wide open. His head's like a hickory nut. So you're not going to croak without help, eh?"

The last was added when the two ruffians appeared in the entrance to the stall, both halting to glare down at the prostrate detective.

Nick Carter gazed up at them, pale and bruised, but his eyes had lost none of their confidence and severe austerity.

"It's no fault of yours, Mauler, that I am still in the land of the living," he sternly answered.

"You bet it ain't," growled Sol, with expressive nods. "You'd have been done brown and planted deep, barring a kick came from one we have to hear to. He ain't taking chances of a rope. The coin is all he's out for."

"We've got it, too," put in Zeke, with a villainous leer. "We got it in spite of you."

"Make sure you hang onto it, then," Nick coldly advised.

"You can bet your boots on that. We'll soon have it planted where no infernal New York dick will find it."

"Don't be so sure of it. You may slip a cog."

"No slips for us," said Sol confidently. "You ought to know that, Carter."

"I'm not telling all I know."

"They did a fat job who brought you down here to corral us fellows," Mauler went on derisively. "We're too slick for any city guy of your cut. Why, I near laughed in your ugly mug, when you boarded that express car and shoved a letter from Burdick under my nose."

"You did, eh?"

"And then you started in to tell me who you was and all about the job you were out to queer. Oh, my, but that was rich!" cried the ruffian, with a burst of coarse laughter in which his low-browed brother joined.

"Yes, very rich," Nick allowed.

"And then you pulled out a gun and wanted to know was I game?" cried the rascal, shaking with evil mirth. "You shoved the gun right in my hand and as much as told me to hold you up. I did it all right, Carter, and we got you—as we're going to get those two duffers who've been helping you."

"Unless they contrive to get you, you miscreant," Nick retorted, frowning.

"Don't you bank on that," cried Mauler, with a snort and sneer. "We'll have both of them by this time to-morrow. We'll wipe you off the earth, all of you, and—by thunder, Zeke, that must be Murdock already. Let's have a look."

The chugging of the laboring touring car, which was at that moment entering the clearing, had fallen upon the ears of all.

Sol and Zeke Mauler rushed out of the stable, and uttered a series of triumphant yells when they saw the laden car and the powerless captive it contained.

It swept around the yard back of the house and stopped nearly in front of the stable.

Jake Hanlon came running from the house at the same moment, while Murdock leaped out of the car and cried:

"Hold your tongue, Sol. Your yelling would wake the dead."

"There'll soon be dead uns here to wake, all right," Sol shouted. "So you've got the other one, eh?"

"One of them."

And that leaves only one."

"We'll get him, too, a little later," snapped Murdock. "Lend a hand and bring him into the stable. We must get rid of both before dark."

"We'll do that, all right."

"Swing round, Bryan, and back in the car after they've got him out," Murdock continued to command. "It might be seen and known by chance. Get it under cover. I don't want it suspected that I am in this business with you fellows. That would queer us, for fair."

"You're booked to be queered, all right," thought Chick, while three of the ruffians were hastening to lift him from the car and bear him into the stable.

His anticipations were realized very much sooner, even than he expected.

Of the six ruffians comprising the gang, five of them were flocking into the small stable, three bearing the bound form of the detective.

Only Bryan remained outside, and he fell to turning the car, in which Janet Payson still was seated.

Not one among them had any apprehension of immediate danger.

Other figures were approaching, however, those of half a score of men, Patsy Garvan among them. They were stealing as noiselessly as shadows from the woods and shrubbery back of the stable, which they rapidly approached, with ranks dividing to pass around both sides of it.

Every man was armed with a rifle or a shotgun, save Patsy Garvan, and he carried a revolver in each hand.

As now may be inferred, Chick Carter's ruse had been to place himself in the hands of Janet Payson and the man known to be her confederate, knowing that they would take him to the headquarters of the gang, and in the meantime to have Patsy so stationed with assistants north of Benton Corners that the subsequent course of the rascals could be stealthily followed.

As a matter of fact, however, Patsy had seen the car containing Murdock, Bryan, and Magee, two of whom he recognized, when it went through Benton Corners on its way to Shelby. The plans already laid with Chick told him what would follow, beyond any reasonable doubt, and he at once set about tracing the tracks of the touring car in the direction from which it had come.

This, of course, brought him and his companions to the Mauler place, less than ten minutes before Chick was brought there, and all hands were concealed scarce thirty feet back of the stable at that time.

The noise within had not abated when they came around both front corners of the stable, half a score of constables and officers from Shelby, but the voice of Patsy Garvan then rang like a trumpet over other sounds.

"Now, boys, get them!" he shouted, leading the way. "Some of you look after that fellow in the car. We've got those in the stable cornered like rats."

There were yells of dismay from within before the last was said, and a rush of five crooks toward the open door.

Not a man among them ventured over its threshold however, or so much as drew a weapon in self-defense. The scene that met their gaze was enough to have daunted any gang of desperadoes.

For they found themselves confronted with half a score of leveled weapons, in the hands of as many determined men, and not one among them but knew that an aggressive move meant death.

It followed, therefore, that the arrest of the entire gang was an easy task. All were in irons in less than five minutes, and long before dark they occupied cells in the Shelby County Jail.

The money stolen from the express car was found in the cellar of the house, and later in the day was restored to the railway company.

Upon returning to the Shelby House with Nick and Patsy, all elated over their good work, Chick found a telegram awaiting him from Lieutenant Lang.

It told him that Dan Cady, the missing express-car man, had been found confined in Janet Payson's flat in Philadelphia, in charge of another confederate, who had been arrested.

It then appeared that Cady had been on friendly terms with the woman and with Murdock, and that he had carelessly confided the fact that he was to carry a costly money package to Shelby on the night in question. This led to Murdock's plot with his confederates, all having been awaiting the opportunity to commit the car robbery in the manner described, and Cady was lured to the flat in the early part of the day and overcome, Sol Mauler cleverly playing the part of his substitute.

This was rendered all the more feasible because of the fact that Murdock was one of the old railway hands, discharged for evil habits, and he was thoroughly familiar with all of the details essential to such a plot.

"It will teach Cady a lesson," Nick remarked to Chick and Patsy that evening, as they sat smoking in their suite in the hotel. "He'll select his companions more carefully in the future. As for Murdock and the gang—well, it now is up to them to pay the price."

THE END.

"Broken Bars; or, Nick Carter's Speedy Service," is the title of the story that you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 132, out March 20th. The great detective and his assistants have more dealings with the desperate criminals that they thought they had so safely jailed.

A SUDDEN THING.

It is generally the easiest thing in the world to drive a horse without spirit, but there is one recorded instance where a coach driver covered himself with glory by doing so.

One afternoon he and his coach and four came rattling up to the hotel like an avalanche. As the coach stopped, one of the horses dropped dead.

"That was a very sudden death," remarked a bystander

"That sudden?" coolly responded the driver; "that 'os died at the top of the hill two miles back, sir, but I wasn't going to let him down till I got to the reg'lar stoppin' place."

ON A DARK STAGE.

By ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 127 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XX.

THE SECOND ACT.

Klein went on with the business of his part, poking at the property fire—a bunch of red globes buried in a grate of coke. Other characters made their appearance, and the dialogue opened briskly.

Miss Lindner, first to pick up the silver frame, frowned as she delivered her lines. In an undertone, aside to Klein, who was busily engaged in dusting an already spotless piece of china, she said:

"According to the property man, I've got a new lover to-day. Did you notice the change?"

She laughed—her back was to the audience—and as Dodge, the character man, entered, noisily, she made a face at him. Dodge took his art seriously, and would not "clown" on a scene. Others of the cast, aware of it, "kidded" him at every possible opportunity.

When Dodge stood in front of the picture, addressing it in thunderous rage—as the play demanded he should—Klein watched him narrowly. Nothing happened, and Klein decided mentally that the character man had not noticed the difference between to-day's photograph and the one used in the previous performances.

By this time Tanner was on the scene, and for possibly ten minutes the dialogue and the action did not concern the photograph. Then Miss Lindner made a hurried exit, and Tanner began a soliloquy.

This was one of the longest speeches in the piece, and the best, and Tanner delivered it with all the power and passion he could command. At the finish, Klein, as the butler, was supposed to enter and announce a visitor, who happened to be Metcalfe.

Just before Klein's entrance Tanner strode across the floor and picked up the frame. To this he was supposed to deliver the final line, which at the same time supplied the butler's cue.

"And as for Lord Wellingmay," he dramatically recited, "let him beware. I am not the man to——" He stopped so abruptly as to cause a titter to run through the audience, who, up to this point had listened, spellbound.

Tanner had picked up the frame at this critical moment and noticed the photograph.

Klein, waiting in the doorway for his cue, felt his pulse quicken. The sight of the photograph—Delmar's photograph—had caused Tanner to hesitate!

The wait grew longer. Fearful of the delay, and aware that his entrance might set the dialogue moving once more, Klein stepped through the door.

"A visitor, Mr. Lemly!" he announced stiffly.

Klein's line apparently brought Tanner back to earth again, and with a peculiar frown he turned and took up his cue.

While they were waiting for Metcalfe to enter, Klein spoke aside to Tanner in the way that is quite common on the stage, and which is often done, although the audience has no idea how much private conversation goes on among the actors during a play.

"What made you go up in the air?" he asked—and all the time a voice whispered in his ear: "Tanner's the man! Tanner's the man! His actions have proved it!"

Tanner, meanwhile, was fumbling nervously at his collar.

"I guess it—it was my nerves," he answered. "I've been pounding too hard on the next week's part. It's frightfully warm here, isn't it?"

The entrance of Metcalfe interrupted the conversation. The juvenile man dashed in and addressed his opening line to Tanner. Klein withdrew to the background, where he arranged the decanter and the glasses on a tray, preparatory to the next piece of business.

The dialogue between the other men continued. Both poured out their drinks. Metcalfe, posing dramatically before the table, proposed a toast.

But the toast was never drunk. Hardly had the words left Metcalfe's lips when he reeled slightly; the muscles in his throat contracted violently. The glass slipped from his fingers and crashed upon the surface of the polished table.

A strange hush fell upon the scene, and in the silence the steady hum of the calciums came like the droning of a million bees.

It seemed an age must have elapsed before the strain was broken, but in reality it could not have been more than a few seconds. Yet in that time, swift as it was, and unexpected, too, Klein had discovered the reason for the interruption.

Metcalfe's eyes, at the moment of the toast, had fallen upon Delmar's photograph. And the sight of it had robbed him of all speech! He had betrayed even greater agitation than had Tanner. What did it mean? What could it mean, other than——

Like a snapping of a taut thread the tension was broken. Metcalfe, as if suddenly aroused from a stupor, broke into a hard and forced laugh, and he took up the regular lines of the play.

Passing close to him, bearing the tray, Klein noticed that the juvenile man's fingers were clenched and that he was breathing a trifle faster than normal.

Klein was off the scene before the curtain of the act, and was touching up his eyes when Metcalfe came into the dressing room.

In a calm and matter-of-fact way Klein sought to bring out the truth of the affair by referring to the incident casually.

"Were you trying to reconstruct the second act?" he asked.

Metcalfe sank down into his chair and removed his wig. "What are you getting at?" he asked curtly.

"Why, that impromptu scene over the toast," Klein explained. "It was good as far as it went."

The juvenile man's hands were still trembling as he squared himself in his chair preparatory to removing his make-up. "I—I don't know what—what came over me. My nerve, I guess."

"You looked as if you'd seen a ghost," Klein ventured to suggest.

Metcalfe flashed him a quick glance, but Klein, bending over his mirror, pretended not to notice it.

"I—I guess I did see a ghost," he wavered. "Maybe I am a fool, and all of that, but if——" He hesitated, daubing his cheeks. "Klein," he began once more, as if determined to relieve his mind of some weight, "I've been upset ever since I joined this company. There is something—something I'd like to talk over with you."

"Fire away," Klein told him, treating the statement with assumed indifference. "I'm all ears. I suppose one of your mash notes——"

"It is nothing like that, Klein," Metcalfe interrupted gravely. "I'm serious for once."

He paused, slowly unbuttoning his waistcoat. Klein waited expectantly for him to continue, confident that whatever was troubling the juvenile man would have a direct bearing upon Delmar's photograph. That the photograph had temporarily upset and confused Tanner was not to be questioned. The excuse he had given Klein was obviously a lie. Then, following this, had come Metcalfe's dramatic scene, which beyond any doubt had been prompted by the same photograph.

Yet both men avoided the real issue, and both attributed their lack of self-control to a case of "nerves."

"In the first place," Metcalfe said, "on the very day I left New York——"

The door of the dressing room was at this present moment thrown open, and Dodge stepped inside. He stood before the occupants with folded arms, glaring from one to another.

"What's the trouble, Dodge?" Metcalfe asked, sinking back in his chair, plainly annoyed at the interruption.

"Matter? Matter?" Dodge burst out indignantly. "I should think you gentlemen would be ashamed of yourselves!"

"Ashamed?" echoed Klein. "What have we——"

"I'd like to be stage manager of this company for about five minutes," the character man interrupted. "That's what I would! Such outrageous actions as I witnessed this afternoon would not be tolerated for an instant. You gentlemen have absolutely no respect for your profession—none at all. To clown on a scene deliberately is beneath the dignity of a conscientious artist."

"He's off," muttered Metcalfe; then louder: "I suppose when you were with Booth and Barrett——"

"When I was with Booth, young man," thundered Dodge, his deep voice rolling impressively, "we looked upon our art as a most serious matter. In those palmy days, sir, an actor held himself above such shameful proceedings as clowning. Mr. Booth would no more have allowed it than——"

"When I was playing the leads with 'Too Proud to Beg,'" mocked the juvenile man, burlesquing the other, "in the palmy days of the melodrama, we were——"

"Say no more," interrupted Dodge, lifting a hand. "It is not a thing to jest over. An artistic performance should never be marred by impromptu speeches."

Metcalfe puckered his lips and started to whistle. Dodge glared at him for a second, then almost turned pale under his make-up.

Metcalfe laughed. "Still superstitious, Dodge? Well, don't take it too hard. Let's see; to whistle in a dressing room is a sign that the man nearest the door will be whistled out of the company. Isn't that it?"

But the character man stalked out, slamming the door behind him.

"I guess he took the hint," Klein said. "To my mind, he is the one bore in the company."

The call boy's voice came echoing through the hall:

"Third act! Third act!"

Klein, who was on near the opening of the act, rose to his feet.

"That's me! I almost missed my entrance last night. If I get in late this afternoon, Bond will fine me. I'll talk with you later, Metcalfe."

He hurried out of the room and down the hall to the stage.

CHAPTER XXI.

ENTER THE GIRL.

The following night, Saturday, while the stage crew were setting the second act, Klein strolled into the property room for a "side prop."

"Where's my decanter?" he asked of the property man, Kingston.

The latter motioned toward a shelf. "Up there. I've had a new batch of tea put in it."

Klein took the decanter and started with it toward the door. At the same time he noticed Kingston placing a new photograph in the silver frame used in the coming act.

Aware of the actor's apparent interest, the property man said, in a disgusted way: "These fool temperamental actors make me sick. Tanner told me I must change the picture in this frame. I told him to go chase himself, but when Metcalfe came along a few minutes later and asked me to do the same thing—well, I thought I'd better give in and not take chances on makin' trouble."

"What is the matter with the photograph?" Klein asked casually.

"That's what I couldn't get at," Kingston returned. "The thing ain't seen by the audience. If it wasn't for the director stickin' to what he calls details, I could just as well have stuck in a sheet of cardboard."

Klein reflected, watching the man insert a new photograph and toss Delmar's into a drawer.

"Didn't Tanner or Metcalfe give any reason why they wanted the change made?" he asked presently.

"Nary a one," Kingston answered. "Oh, I ain't been around actors for ten years for nothin'. You got to treat 'em like a bunch of kids. If I didn't change this picture, and one or the other of the fellows went up in the air over it, Bond would lay me out. You see, I ain't takin' no chances."

Klein went on the scene that night still puzzled. The fact that both Tanner and Metcalfe had urged Kingston to remove Delmar's photograph from the frame suggested to Klein's mind several possibilities.

In attempting to deceive him, both men had placed themselves in a bad light. It was plain to Klein that the two men had been acquainted with Delmar, in one way or another, and for certain reasons neither of them desired the fact to become known.

Had not Dodge interrupted yesterday, Metcalfe might have cleared up some of the mystery; but later, when Klein broached the subject in a tactful manner—he did not want to give the impression of being too interested—

the juvenile man seemed strangely perturbed, and did not appear at all anxious to resume the story.

While Klein was disappointed, he was still far from being discouraged—in fact, he had long ago dismissed the latter word from his vocabulary.

"As Nick Carter would say," he murmured to himself, as he took his position before the fireplace and waited for the rising of the curtain: "'The trail is growing warmer every minute.'"

After the fall of the final curtain, a party of young people who had witnessed the performance came back to the stage. Metcalfe, who had been through the second act, guided them around, answering volleys of questions.

To the ordinary person in the audience there is always a certain amount of mystery and glamour connected with the region on the other side of the footlights, and when offered an opportunity to visit this kingdom of canvas and tinsel little time is lost in accepting.

When Klein had finished dressing and was giving a final tug at his cravat, the door of his room was flung open and a bevy of giggling girls, led by Metcalfe, swarmed in.

"Behold Mr. Klein!" cried the juvenile man, making an exaggerated bow. "Our lowly but none the less faithful butler."

Klein was introduced to all of the party.

"This comes near being a surprise party, doesn't it?" he exclaimed. "Oh, perhaps, you ladies are making a tour of inspection."

"Miss Lydecker has come to invite us all to her house," said Metcalfe enthusiastically.

Klein bowed his personal acknowledgment. Miss Lydecker seemed about the most attractive girl he had ever seen.

On the way out of the theater Klein found himself between Miss Lydecker and her friend, Miss Reed. The latter was considerably the younger of the two girls, and appeared to be at that age when the feminine heart is likely to yearn for the glamour of the footlights.

"I think you made a splendid butler, Mr. Klein," she said. "Really, I do. I told Helen so when you first came out. Didn't I, Helen?"

Helen Lydecker nodded.

"Oh, it must be wonderful to be on the stage," Miss Reed went on, gazing around at the bare walls, her eyes shining. "To think of devoting all the years of your life to such a grand profession! Don't you just love it, Mr. Klein?"

"I find it interesting," Klein answered. Swiftly, like a film upon a screen, he recalled the hours he had spent in chilly offices waiting for engagements that never materialized; recalled, too, the nerve-racking rehearsals, once an engagement had been trapped, and the hundred side parts he had learned in a few days, to say nothing of the weary months of one-night stands. All of this he remembered, but still smiled into the girl's eager face.

Later, when they had reached the stage door and were climbing into several automobiles standing at the curb, Miss Reed leaned close to Klein and whispered:

"I'm just dying to be an actress. Don't you think you could help me to get on the stage?"

"I'm afraid any assistance I might offer would be of small benefit," Klein answered. "Getting a start upon the stage depends on the individual."

In the automobile Klein was separated from Miss Reed—a condition of affairs that brought no regret—and found Helen Lydecker a delightful substitute.

From her he learned that these Saturday-night dances at her home were regular throughout the season, and that the members of the Hudson Stock Company were always honored guests.

"You see," she hastened to explain, "I discovered there were no rehearsals on Sunday mornings, so that made it possible for you of the company to remain up a little later on Saturday nights. Oh, I have taken a great interest in theatricals. Father, you know, owns the house in which the company is playing."

"Your friend, Miss Reed, is also interested in the profession, isn't she?" Klein returned. They both laughed.

"Miss Reed imagines she has had a great sorrow in her life," Miss Lydecker said. "It was a love affair, of course."

"And so she turns to the stage for solace, I suppose."

"That must be it."

The three big automobiles had deserted the city streets, and were spinning swiftly along the hard dirt road. Suddenly they swerved and began climbing a slope.

"Our home is quite a distance from the town," Miss Lydecker remarked, as the machines glided between high iron gates and came to a stop before a big white house. "But it makes it all the more enjoyable."

Klein helped her out of the motor car. The others, laughing and chattering, hurried indoors. Miss Lydecker motioned him to the far end of the long porch.

"Look!" She stretched out a hand. "Isn't that wonderful? I often sit here for hours."

Far below, in the soft, white moonlight, spread the great Atlantic. The booming of the surf came faintly to Klein's ears; the humid tang of salt air crept to his nostrils and misted against his cheeks.

"It is wonderful," he murmured. Then, after a pause, he added: "This is my first real glimpse of the Atlantic."

"You're from inland, then?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No. California claims me. I belong to that sect of egotists known as Native Sons. We are not supposed to hear, feel, or see, once we have stepped across our State line. Naturally, under these conditions, I am of the opinion that there is no ocean except the Pacific."

The girl smiled and tossed her head. "Will you always hold that opinion, Mr. Klein?"

"I don't know," he reluctantly confessed. "I—I believe I am already weakening."

From one end of the porch ran a narrow footbridge, spanning the lower lawn and ending at a high cliff. Miss Lydecker, noticing Klein's interest in this, hastened to explain.

"Daddy has built a summerhouse on the very edge of that cliff. Would you care to go out? We call it Eagle's Nest."

They ventured out, the girl leading the way. Reaching the cliff, the two stood for a minute in silence, gazing down upon the sea. Only a narrow rail, breast-high, was between them and a sheer drop of a hundred feet.

"Don't lean too far over the rail," the girl warned him, half jesting. "One of our men fell here a few years ago." She shuddered. "I wouldn't come near the Nest for months afterward."

Suddenly, above the steady throb of the surf, there came the first sounds of a distant orchestra.

"There!" exclaimed Miss Lydecker; "the first dance! And we're missing it."

They ran along the footbridge and across the broad porch toward the big door. Just as they were about to enter, Miss Lydecker stopped short, and a cry came from her lips.

"What is the matter?" Klein asked anxiously.

"Right there!" She pointed a finger.

"What?"

"A man! I saw him slipping along—near those bushes!"

Without another word Klein leaped from the porch and gained the high hedge that ran parallel to the pebbled roadway. He searched both sides for a dozen yards, finally giving up the hunt and rejoining the girl.

"It must have been a ghost," he told her laughingly.

"I certainly saw some one," she answered nervously. Then her brow cleared. "How foolish of me! Let's not waste any more time. The first dance will be over before we get on the floor."

CHAPTER XXII.

A NEW MYSTERY.

After several dances in the big room cleared for that purpose, the guests were invited to an adjoining room, where supper was served by the hostess and her mother. Tanner, Metcalfe, and other members of the stock company were hovering about Miss Lydecker, drinking impromptu toasts, laughing, and exchanging pleasantries.

She finally broke away from them and came over to where Klein was chatting with Miss Reed.

"I was just telling Miss Reed," Klein said, "how careless the majority of you girls are with your jewels."

"You don't suppose for one minute, Mr. Klein, that we would keep them locked up when so many gallant men are about!" Miss Lydecker exclaimed. She fumbled at a big brooch pinned on her bodice. It was a wonderful piece of workmanship, fashioned of diamonds and other precious stones, and cunningly wrought in the shape of a lotus flower.

"Daddy gave me this last week, and told me never to wear it except on state occasions," Miss Lydecker announced. "It has been in our family several generations, and——"

Metcalfe interrupted at this moment. "Playing favorites so early in the evening, Miss Lydecker?" he asked.

"I've just been given a warning," she said.

"A Black-hand letter?" asked Tanner, who had strolled up.

"Hardly as bad as that. But as usual it fell upon deaf ears."

Several other men came up at this moment, and the conversation was abruptly shifted. Klein watched as Miss Lydecker walked away, surrounded by a group of admirers.

Perhaps five minutes elapsed. None of the guests had left the room—of this Klein was positive, since he was sitting nearest the door—and the incessant chatter rose and fell like the murmur of surf on a distant shore.

The men were allowed to enjoy cigars, and the room was soon filled with drifting smoke. Tanner, evidently at some one's request, stepped to the nearest window and opened it.

"There!" he exclaimed. "That's better." He drew in a deep breath. "Isn't the sea air refreshing?"

He sat down on the arm of Klein's chair. "Do you know it is three o'clock?"

"I'd forgotten about the time," Klein answered. "I suppose we ought to be home."

"Dress rehearsal to-morrow night, remember," Tanner cautioned. "Bond raked me over the coals to-day. I've got sixty sides for next week, and I've hardly glanced at the script. It is up to me to pound all day to-morrow."

Miss Lydecker came over and joined them. "The party is breaking up. I'll have the cars sent around," she said.

"That's thoughtful of you, Miss Lydecker," replied Tanner. "What a hostess you are!"

"You must not forget next Saturday night," she cautioned both of the men. "We're going to have a real party. It's my birthday. Daddy has promised me an orchestra from New York."

"You could not keep us away," murmured Tanner.

Klein, who had been watching her closely, suddenly spoke. "I notice, after all, Miss Lydecker, that you have taken heed of my warning."

"What warning?" she asked, frowning.

"About the brooch. You have put it away."

The girl's hand went quickly to her collar, and instantly she paled. "The—the brooch," she gasped; "it's—gone."

"You didn't take it off yourself?" cried Klein.

"No," she faltered; "I—I—it's lost."

"Good Lord!" broke from Tanner's lips.

"You haven't been out of this room since you spoke with me last, have you?" inquired Klein.

She shook her head.

"Then it must be in here—some place!"

Tanner gripped Klein's arms. "Do you think some one might——"

"We'll have to find that out," said Klein. "I've been sitting here for the past half hour. Not one of the guests passed out; I'm positive of that."

Tanner's eyes narrowed as he caught Klein's meaning. "I understand. We'll keep them all here until——"

A few minutes later the whole room was made aware of the discovery. The girls huddled together in a frightened group, while the men gathered around Tanner and Klein.

"I saw the brooch barely fifteen minutes ago," Klein said, addressing them. "And Miss Lydecker has not been out of this room. The brooch must be in here."

Under his direction the room was gone over, inch by inch. Nothing was found. After that, at Tanner's suggestion, each of the men submitted himself to a search. Tanner allowed Klein to search him, and then the process was reversed. Following this, Klein assured himself that none of the other men present had the jewel upon him.

Klein walked over to Miss Lydecker and spoke to her. "Don't give up so readily, Miss Lydecker. Your brooch cannot be far away." Every man here, I am sure, will make a determined effort to——"

"What—what'll daddy say?" she moaned. "He told me not to wear it."

"Cheer up!" exclaimed Klein. "I'll wager you'll be wearing it before next Saturday night."

Miss Lydecker finally calmed herself, and offered a limp hand to the departing guests. The machines drew up at the door, and the girls and their escorts silently took their seats.

"Don't worry too much," Klein said, smiling into her white face; "things may brighten to-morrow. Good-by."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ARDENT SLEUTH.

Irving Hamilton Tod, man of means and colt reporter for the New York *Morning News*, realized, after his painful interview with the warden at the Newport jail, that for the second time in almost as many days he had been outwitted.

The warden at the jail had never heard of a detective by the name of Jarge. Where, then, had this black-eyed sleuth disappeared to, and what had been his object in lying? Had he taken Klein back to New York?

With a dozen other questions hammering at his brain, Tod walked slowly back to the hotel. Passing the telegraph office recalled to his mind the hopeful message he had sent to Reed, the city editor. It was like salt to an open wound.

"Reed will hand me another laugh," he muttered dismally. "Fate's against me, sure."

He dragged himself through the hotel lobby; then, catching sight of a swinging door and hearing the tinkle of glasses, he determined to do a very unusual thing.

"I'll take a good, stiff drink before I eat," he said to himself, with an air of martyrdom.

He pushed his way into the bar and gulped down a high ball. His lagging and depressed spirits seemed started on the upward climb. He encouraged them by repeating his order. Just as he finished tipping up the second glass a hand fell upon his shoulder.

"Hello," he said, whirling, "who are you?"

A flushed and grinning face was lifted to his own.

"I remember you," the intruder stated very clearly, blinking his eyes. "Your friends left you at the dock last night, didn't they?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tod, as the truth dawned upon him. "You're the cabby who——" He stopped, and his heart began to pound swiftly. What luck this was!

"What are you drinking?" he asked, motioning to the alert barkeeper.

When the drinks were before them, Tod resumed his talk. "Where did you take my friends last night, cabby?"

The cabby grinned, tossed off his drink, and wiped his lips with the back of his hand.

"Take 'em? Well, at first they wanted the police station—then they wanted the railroad station. So I took 'em there!"

"To the railroad station?"

"Just that. I'm thinkin' it was funny—but it ain't my place to ask questions. Just so long as I gets my fare, what's the odds!". He paused and bestowed a longing glance upon the bottle in front of him.

"Fill it up again," Tod said quickly.

"Thanks, I'll just do that." The glass was filled and pressed to his lips.

"Did you notice what train my friends took?" Tod inquired.

"They didn't both take the same train," was the unexpected answer. "I—I was hangin' around waitin' for a fare, so I watched." The cabby chuckled to himself. "No, sir, they didn't! One of 'em takes the four o'clock for Fall River and the other gets on the express for Boston."

"Good Lord!" burst from Tod. Then, after an effort to control his voice, he asked: "Which one took the express for Boston?"

The cabby's head was rolling unsteadily from side to side. "Which—which one? Now jus' let me see." He weighed the question for a moment.

"One of the men wore a badge. You saw it, didn't you?" broke from the expectant Tod.

"Sure, I saw it," returned the cabby, wagging a forefinger in the air. "And he—and he was the fellow what took the—the Fall River train."

"The man with the badge took the Fall River train?"

"Sure."

"Then the other man went to Boston?"

"Sure."

This final announcement sent Tod's heart galloping. His wide, blue eyes, once so clouded, brightened like an April sky after a shower. "Thanks! Have a couple more on me!" he said, tossed a bill on the bar, and darted out through the swinging doors into the lobby.

In another minute he had paid his bill at the desk and was hurrying down the street toward the railroad station. The clerk had informed him that a train left for Boston in five minutes.

"Everything isn't lost, after all," he told himself exultantly. "What a fool I was to be discouraged so soon! Klein's in Boston, and I'll get him before the week is out!"

And so enthusiastic did he become over the glowing prospects ahead of him, that he completely forgot that he had neither bathed nor shaved nor had his breakfast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. AMOS JARGE.

Two days previous to the mysterious robbery at the Lydecker home a slim, black-eyed stranger, alighting from the local train at Hudson, inquired of the cabman who drove him up to the business section the location of a certain real-estate firm.

As the result of his visit there the stranger engaged an office in the most prominent business building in the town, and upon the glass door, so that all who passed might read, was lettered:

AMOS JARGE.
PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY.

On the Monday following the robbery the portly form of Mr. Lydecker might have been seen entering the elevator of the same building. And directly behind him, also entering the elevator, came hurrying another man. Apparently preoccupied, this latter stepped upon Mr. Lydecker's heels. Instantly he drew back with profuse apologies.

"A thousand pardons, sir! I—I——" He broke off abruptly and held out his hand. "Why, Mr. Lydecker! This is, indeed, a surprise."

Mr. Lydecker's brow cleared and he accepted the hand. "Bless my soul! What are you doing in Hudson, Mr. Jarge?"

Jarge laughed. "I had quite forgotten that you lived in this city," he declared. "Let me see, the last time we met was——"

"On the Fall River boat," interrupted Mr. Lydecker. "I can never forget that incident! You returned my daughter's jewels to me; don't you remember?"

"Quite so." Jarge nodded slowly. "Of course, of course! That was during the time of my employment with the

Fall River Company. Since you have recalled it, I remember the incident perfectly."

They had stepped out of the elevator now and were standing in the hall.

"Then you are no longer in the services of the——" Mr. Lydecker began.

"I resigned a month ago," Jarge interrupted. "I have since started in business for myself. I have opened a chain of offices between Boston and New York."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Mr. Lydecker. "And where——"

"Straight ahead of you, sir." Jarge waved indifferently toward a door at the end of the hall. "That is my headquarters for Hudson and the surrounding district."

Mr. Lydecker followed the hand, and read the black letters on the glass door of the office.

"Well, well," he remarked, "this is pleasing news. I sincerely trust you will find success in your new venture, Mr. Jarge."

"Thank you. I believe I have made a good beginning." He paused reflectively, as if his thoughts were a thousand miles away. "And now, if you will pardon me, Mr. Lydecker," he announced, "I will be hurrying back to my desk. There are so many details to arrange and so much——"

"Certainly, certainly," broke in the other. "I understand, of course. And—and possibly, later on, I might have a little work for you myself, Mr. Jarge."

The detective nodded in a disinterested manner. "I shall be pleased to handle it. Good day, sir."

Jarge swung briskly away, and Mr. Lydecker watched as the door closed behind him. Then he walked down the hall.

"A very smart and intelligent man, this Jarge," he told himself. "I think I will make no mistake in hiring him."

The next day Mr. Lydecker called at Jarge's office, only to be met by a curt and busy stenographer with the announcement that the detective was out on an important case, and would not return before the next day.

On the following afternoon Mr. Lydecker was again unfortunate, and learned from the same busy and curt stenographer that Mr. Jarge was still engaged and was not expected in the office until Friday at the very earliest.

So, on Friday, Mr. Lydecker called up Jarge on the telephone and asked for an appointment.

The detective happened to be in his office at the time. "I'm afraid I will have to disappoint you, Mr. Lydecker," he said. "I'm pressed with other business. Wouldn't some day next week answer just as well?"

"I must see you to-day," insisted the other. "It is a very important matter."

"Perhaps one of my assistants can be of service to you," Jarge went on to say. "I can arrange to have——"

Mr. Lydecker demurred at once. "I must take this up with you personally, Mr. Jarge. I am willing to pay extra for the favor. But it must be arranged before to-morrow."

"I don't see just how——" Jarge began, only to be interrupted by:

"Let me see you for five minutes. I can explain my case and you can judge for yourself. You can surely grant me that much time, Mr. Jarge."

The detective hesitated, then cleared his throat. "Very well, Mr. Lydecker," he answered reluctantly. "I can allow you five minutes. I will be in the office at eleven o'clock sharp."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Jarge. I shall be there on the hour. If you only knew how——"

But the detective had already hung up his receiver. So the perturbed Mr. Lydecker was forced to do the same.

Promptly at eleven o'clock Mr. Lydecker stepped nervously out of the elevator on the sixth floor of the business block, and, walking to the far end of the hall, entered the office of Mr. Amos Jarge, private detective.

TO BE CONTINUED.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

The jury had retired for consultation prior to bringing in a verdict of "Guilty," which was expected of them. Retiring at all seemed little more than a farce, for from the beginning to the end of the case the evidence had gone so steadily against the defendant that by the time the last witness had been called there was no manner of doubt in the public mind that Robert Sullivan had deliberately and in cold blood murdered Jack Wilder, and it needed not the vigorous speech of the prosecuting attorney to convince any one to that effect.

The evidence, being briefly summed up, ran as follows: Robert, or, as he was more familiarly called, Bob Sullivan, while in a state of intoxication, quarreled with and lost his last cent to Jack Wilder, a professional sharper. Awaking the morning after his debauch, to find himself beggared, he had sworn, in the presence of several witnesses, to get his money back or kill the man who had outwitted him. Accordingly, he had set out to meet Wilder on his return from a neighboring town, and next day the body of the latter was found in a lonely stretch of the road, with a knife sticking in his heart.

Sullivan had been obliged to admit that he had met his enemy near this spot, and that they had a stormy interview, but maintained that they parted without blows, as Wilder promised him to restore his money. There was no tittle of circumstantial evidence wanting to confirm the appearance of Sullivan's guilt, and even the attorney for the defense was privately convinced of the falsity and absurdity of his client's plea of "Not guilty."

The judge, a large, pompous man, having instructed the jury in his most severe and autocratic manner, busied himself with some papers, and did not deign a glance to the assemblage below. It was, as could readily be observed, a gathering of small tradespeople and farmers. Here and there the keen face of a lawyer or that of a stranger from the neighboring city stood out boldly from the sea of honest vacuity which surrounded it.

The prisoner sat with his face buried in his hands, which had lost their former tan, and were pale and trembling. Near him was his wife, hugging a sickly babe to her breast, and showing in her wild eyes, twitching mouth, and every line of her meager, stooping figure, the terror which held her in its grasp. A breathless silence was upon that audience in the shabby courtroom; even the baby had ceased its fretful wailing, and the buzz of a bluebottle fly entangled in a spider's web in the window was the only sound that broke the stillness.

Five minutes passed, ten, twenty, and still the jury had not come. A murmur of impatience began to be heard, and presently the judge beckoned the sheriff to him,

whispered a few words in his ear, and saw him depart through the same door which apparently swallowed up the jurors. The sheriff made his way through several gloomy passages into a large, light room, where he inquired of the foreman if they were not yet agreed.

"No, we ain't!" gruffly responded that functionary. "There's eleven of us for hangin', but Conway, there, won't hear to it. He wants to clear the feller out an' out, an' says he'll stay with us till kingdom come before he'll budge an inch."

Giles Conway, the man whose obstinacy was causing such unnecessary delay, was seated rather apart from the rest, and wore the brown jeans and soft hat which marked him a farmer. Even had not the absence of any attempt at foppishness proclaimed his caste, there was something about him which insensibly connected itself in the observer's mind with the free winds and untrammeled sunshine of the country. He was much the same color from his head to his feet, for eyes, skin, hair, and beard were alike brown, and only the deep lines on his firm, squarely cut face showed that he was no longer young. Just at present he seemed in no wise disconcerted by the wrathful impatience of his associates, but pushing his felt hat farther back on his head, and settling himself more comfortably in his wooden chair, said slowly:

"No, friends, you won't ever get me to hand over a man to the gallows on such evidence as that, an' there ain't no special use of cussin' about it, for it won't do a bit of good."

"Oh, but that is such foolishness!" broke in one of the group. "Here's all this evidence, that no man in his senses could doubt, a-goin' to prove that Bob Sullivan killed Jack Wilder, and here you sit like a bump on a log, and won't listen to none of it."

"That's just it," replied Conway. "You all think that evidence like that orter hang a man, but if you'd seen as much of that sort of thing as I have, you'd think different. I ain't much of a talker, but maybe you wouldn't mind listenin' to a case of this kind I happen to know about, an' maybe the time I'm done—an' it won't take me long to tell it—you'll see why I don't want to hang a young fellow I've known nearly all my life for somethin' that very likely he didn't do.

"You all know how when I wasn't much over twenty I went West an' put all the money I could rake an' scrape into a ranch an' cattle. Well, the place next to mine was owned by a young fellow—we'll call him Jim Saunders, although that isn't his name—who'd come out, like me, to make his fortune. We took to each other from the first, an' pretty soon we were more like brothers than a good many of the real article I've seen since. After a while Jim told me he was goin' to get married, an' a few weeks later he brought home the prettiest little thing you'd see in a day's ride. She had lots of yellow hair that was always tumblin' down over her shoulders, an' big blue eyes, an' a voice like a wild bird, an' Jim—well, he thought there wasn't nobody like Milly in all the country.

"She seemed fond of him, too, at first, but it wasn't long before I could see that it was a clear case of misfit all round. There was lots of excuse for her, for of course it was a hard life, an' she loved finery an' pretty things, an' Jim didn't have the money to give 'em to her, though he worked early an' late, an' did his level best to make somethin' more than a livin'.

"Maybe it would have turned out all right in time if it hadn't been that one day Jim went to the nearest town to buy some farmin' implements, an' fell in there with a fellow he used to know back East, and nothin' would do him but he must go home with Jim to see how he was fixed. Well, he come, an' it was a black day for Jim when he set foot on his threshold, for from the minute he saw Milly he hadn't eyes for nothin' else, and she bein' a woman, was mightily set up to think a city man would set such store by her.

"He made himself so pleasant an' so much at home that they begged him to stay all night, an' long about twelve o'clock he was, or pretended to be, took awful sick. They worked with him till he got better, and wouldn't hear of his tryin' to go away next mornin'; so he stayed on, setting on the big rockin'-chair with a pillow behind him an' talkin' to Milly while Jim was off at work. He didn't seem in no particular hurry about goin', but Jim never 'spicioned for a minute that anything was wrong, for he liked the fellow first-rate, an' would no more have thought of doubtin' Milly than he would the Lord that made him.

"One evenin' he came in late, tired an' hungry, an' foun' that his wife—his wife that he loved—had left him and gone away with that devil that he thought was his friend! He went wild for a while. It seemed to him like everything was black around him, an' there was great splotches of blood before his eyes, an' he could hear voices that kept a-laughin' at him an' callin' him a fool, an' the only thing he held fast to was that he must follow 'em to the world's end and kill the man that had took away all he had. So he tracked 'em, now here, now there, but always they doubled on him, till at las', when his money was gone, he lost 'em altogether.

"Then he came to himself a little, an' sold his ranch an' went back to his old home to wait—for he knowed somehow that one day, sooner or later, the Lord would give him his revenge. He worked while he waited, an' made money an' got well off, an' nobody knew nothin' 'bout his ever bein' married, so he had somethin' like peace. But he never forgot, an', after a while, it seemed like he didn't feel so hard toward Milly, for he remembered how young she was, an' how foolish, an' what a devil she had to deal with; an' sometimes he could see her with the pretty color all gone from her cheeks, an' the laugh from her voice, heartbroken an' deserted.

"At last, twenty years 'afterward, when he was gettin' on in life, his time came. He was ridin' along, not thinkin' about anything in particular, when he happened to look up, an' there, comin' toward him roun' a bend in the road, an' ridin' on a big black horse, was the man he'd waited for all these years. They knowed each other the minute their eyes met, an' the fellow got white as chalk an' pulled his horse clean back on his haunches, tryin' to turn roun' an' make a run for it, but it wasn't no good, for Jim was off his horse in a minute an' had him by the throat, an' in less time than it takes to tell it, he had pulled him down, cursin' an' cuttin' at him, to the ground. Then, holdin' him there, with his knee on his breast an' his knife at his throat, he says:

"'Where's Milly? Tell me, or I'll cut your devilish heart out!'

"The fellow glared back at him like a rat in a trap, an' seein' death in his eyes, an' knowing 'twas no use to lie, says:

"'She's dead; she got sick when we got to New York, an' I left her, an' she died in a week.'

"'I'd orter kill you like a snake, but I've always lived square, an' the Lord helpin' me, I'll die that way, so I'll give you an even chance. Get out your knife an' fight, an' remember that one of us has got to die right here.'

"Then he let him up, and they went at it. They was pretty evenly matched to look at 'em, but Jim thought of Milly dyin' all alone, an' fought like a tiger, an' pretty soon he left the man that had come between 'em stiff an' stark with a knife in his heart, an' his white face a-glarin' up at the sky.

"Then comes in the part of the story that I want you all to take for a warnin', before you'll be so quick to find any man guilty on nothin' but circumstantial evidence. When the body was found, nobody ever thought of 'spicionin' Jim, but everything pointed to another man as the one who had done the killin'. He'd sworn to kill the dead man; he was on the hunt for him when last seen, an' he couldn't prove no alibi. So they arrested him, and the first Jim heard of it he was summonsed on the jury that was to try him. Jim hadn't never thought of giving himself up for a murder, for he knowed he'd fought and killed his enemy fair an' square, an' he was glad he done it. He didn't see that it was any business of the law's to interfere between 'em, and he didn't like to drag in Milly's name before the judge an' jury an' all the people who wouldn't remember, like he did, when he was young an' innocent. Even when he was summonsed, he didn't have any notion but he would be cleared when they'd look into things some, an' he made up his mind not to say nothin' if he could help it.

"But when he got there, everything went so dead against the prisoner that if he hadn't knowed he'd done the killin' himself, he'd 'a' thought sure he was guilty. He got kind of dazed at last, and didn't seem to know nothin' till he found himself in a room with the rest of the jury, an' all eleven of 'em wanting to hang the man that he knowed was innocent. Then he came to his senses and voted against 'em, an' when they asked him for his reasons, he told 'em the story I've been tellin' you."

Giles Conway stopped and gazed stolidly into the eyes of his audience, who had gathered around him till they hemmed him in on every side.

"An' what did they do with him?" asked the foreman at last.

"I don't know," he answered slowly. "It ain't decided yet, for Jack Wilder was the man that run off with Milly, an' it was me that killed him."

NOT TO BE OUTDONE IN POLITENESS.

A rich old man lying on his deathbed had assembled his three nephews to acquaint them with the manner in which he intended to dispose of his property.

"To you, my dear John, as you have always been a steady and dutiful nephew, I have left the sum of twenty thousand dollars."

"Thank you, my dear uncle," said John, burying his face in his pocket handkerchief to conceal his emotion, "I only hope you may live to enjoy it yourself."

"You, also, Thomas, have been a good lad. I have, therefore, left you the sum of fifteen thousand dollars."

"Thank you, my dear uncle. I only hope you may live to enjoy it yourself."

"As for you, Frank, you have been a sad dog; to you, therefore, I have left the sum of twenty-five cents to buy a rope to hang yourself with."

"Thank you, my dear uncle," said the dutiful nephew. "I only hope you may live to enjoy it yourself!"

THE NEW WEATHER SYSTEM.

By MAX ADELER.

Cooley is the inventor of an improved system of foretelling the weather. He has a lot of barometers, hygrometers, and such things, in his house, and he claims that by reading these intelligently, and watching the clouds in accordance with his theory, a man can prophesy what kind of weather there will be three days ahead. They were getting up a Sunday-school picnic in town in May, and as Cooley ascertained that there would be no rain on a certain Thursday, they selected that day for the purpose. The sky looked gloomy when they started, but as Cooley declared that it absolutely couldn't rain on Thursday, everybody felt that it was safe to go. About two hours after the party reached the grounds, however, a shower came up, and it rained so hard that it ruined all the provisions, wet everybody to the skin, and washed all the cake to dough. Besides, Peter Marks was struck by lightning. On the following Monday the agricultural exhibition was to be held, but as Mr. Cooley foresaw that there would be a terrible northeast storm on that day, he suggested to the president of the society that it had better be postponed. So they put it off, and that was the only clear Monday we had during May. About the first of June, Mr. Cooley announced that there would not be any rain until the fifteenth, and consequently we had showers every day, right straight along up to that time, with the exception of the tenth day, when there was a slight spit of snow. So on the fifteenth, Cooley foresaw that the rest of the month would be wet, and by an odd coincidence, a drought set in, and it only rained once during the two weeks, and that was on the day which Cooley informed the baseball club that it could play a match, because it would be clear.

On toward the first of July, he began to have some doubts if his improved weather system were correct; he was convinced that it must work by contraries; so when Professor Jones asked him if it would be safe to attempt to have a display of fireworks on the night of the fifth, Cooley brought the improved system into play, and discovered that it promised rainy weather on that night. So then he was certain it would be clear, and he told Professor Jones to go ahead.

On the night of the fifth, just as the professor got his Catherine wheels and skyrockets all in position, it began to rain, and that was the most awful storm we have had this year. It raised the river nearly three feet. As soon as it began, Cooley got the ax, and went upstairs and smashed his hydrometers, hygrometers, barometers, and thermometers. Then he cut down the pole that upheld the weathercock, and burned the manuscript of the book which he was writing in explanation of his system. He leans on "Old Probs" now when he wants to ascertain the probable state of the weather.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Scale Ounce Over Forty Years.

Sealer of Weights and Measures Robert J. Hongen, of Weissport, Pa., in testing a scale used by one of the leading merchants for the past forty years, found that it allowed seventeen instead of sixteen ounces to the pound.

The merchant says he must have lost considerably through this scale, but is glad that it operated in favor of his customers.

Family of Twenty Children.

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Anstine, natives of the Pigeon Mountains, near Spring Grove, Pa., are the parents of twenty children—eight boys and twelve girls. There are no twins or triplets among them.

Mr. Anstine is fifty years old and his wife is forty-five. They live in the remotest part of the Pigeon Mountains, in a small hut having but four rooms. The oldest child is twenty-four years old. The whole family is hale and hearty despite the limited accommodations of their little house. They live mostly by money earned from wood-cutting in the forests.

Famous "Houn' Dawg" in Bad.

The "houn' dawg" is doomed. The hills that now resound with his throaty bellow are to be dotted with sheep and subside in silence, believes Doctor A. J. Hill, who has assisted in preparing a legislative "tin can" to tie to the sagging tail of the kicked-around hound. The dogs are blamed for the high price of mutton and the low price of sheep in the State of Missouri.

Doctor Hill and other interested landowners have drafted a law which provides that all dogs in the State shall be taxed, and that the tax money shall constitute an insurance fund to reimburse sheep owners for their losses by dogs.

Wisdom Teeth; Why so Called.

The so-called wisdom teeth are the last two molars to grow, and they have no real connection with the possession of wisdom. They take their name from the time of their arrival, from twenty to twenty-five years, at which age the average person is supposed to have reached years of discretion.

Cutting one's wisdom teeth means simply arriving at the point of completeness in physical equipment, and has no direct relation to mental equipment. The possession of these teeth is no guarantee of wisdom. They grow at about the same age in people whether they are wise or not.

Walnut Tree Forty-six Years Old.

Colusa, Cal., is laying claim to having the largest California black walnut in the world, but the dimensions of the Colusa tree do not come up to those of a tree that is growing on F. W. Schutz's farm on Sycamore Slough, six miles northeast of Arbuckle, also in Colusa County.

Some time ago an account in newspapers first brought this monster tree before the reading public, and it received much attention throughout the State. The agricultural department of the State University wrote Schutz about it, stating that information sent by him would be used in a book that the department is compiling.

In answer to the request of the university authorities Mr. Schutz has taken accurate measurements of the tree, which are as follows: Circumference one foot from the ground, twenty-two feet, eight inches—below this the roots appear above the surface of the ground, making the tree about twenty-six feet; circumference nine feet from the ground, nineteen feet nine inches; height, 102 feet; width of shadow at noon, 120 feet.

The big tree is forty-six years old, having been planted in 1868 by D. Arnold, a Colusa County pioneer.

Virginia's Oldest Cow Dies.

"Old Nancy," said to be the oldest cow in Virginia, is dead. This cow was fifty-two years old when she expired with the old year, thus turning the recent holiday into a day of gloom for her owner and others. When young, the cow's color had been a blood-red, but for more than twenty years her hair had been turning white, until at the time of her death her hair was as white as the snow that covered the ground.

Her owner, John Adkins, of Big Laurel, Va., was only one day older than Nancy, and at his marriage the cow—then being over twenty—was a wedding gift from his father, who said: "Keep Nancy until she dies, John, for she's a good old cow."

In recent years her owner has been offered good round sums for the aged animal, but he invariably refused, with the remark: "No, no; I'd just as soon think of parting with Martha—his wife—as to allow old Nancy to be toted around the country with a show."

Emigrant from Erin Dies a Millionaire.

The story of the hunt for gold is ever a story of toil and privation, often a tragedy. For the one who strikes it rich, thousands are lost in the oblivion of poverty and ill fate.

Colonel Thomas Cruse, who died at the age of seventy-nine, in Helena, Mont., recently, was one of the lucky few who leaped from poverty to affluence thirty years ago. He discovered the Drum Lummon Gold Mine, north of Helena, sold it to an English syndicate for $1,500,000, retaining one-sixth interest, and shared in the profits of $30,000,000 which the mine has produced.

Mr. Cruse was twenty years old when he left County Cavan, Ireland, to seek his fortune in the mining camps of the West. He roamed around various diggings in California, Nevada, and Idaho, blew into Virginia City, Mont., in 1865, when Alder Gulch was at the height of its glory, and later struck the placers around Helena, where fortune smiled upon him.

Drum Lummon drew its name from the locality in Ireland where Cruse was born. Before it had a name it had a romance redolent with the ill luck of the original finder. He was a little, wiry Frenchman named L. F. Hilderbrand, who drove an express wagon to Deadwood long after Tommy Cruse put Drum Lummon on the mining map. In the very early days Hilderbrand pros-

pected in Montana. A stumble on the mountain side caused him to chip off a piece of a bowlder which was so rich in gold quartz that his eyes popped in the excitement of riches in sight. He and his partner began to look for the lead from which the bowlder sloughed off.

Unfortunately, Hilderbrand and his partner undertook to roll out of the way the great bowlder which gave them a clew to wealth. By one of those queer capers of blasted luck which prospectors fear, the bowlder moved too quickly and rolled over and crushed the arm of Hilderbrand's partner. Being without money and needing medical attention, they left the place, trudged to Helena, where the partner was under the care of a doctor, and Hilderbrand went to work in near-by places to earn money to pay the bill.

Some ten years later, Hilderbrand, still at outs with his luck, and weary of roaming, reached the spot where the bowlder sent his hopes skyward. The bowlder had the appearance of an old acquaintance, but the surroundings were changed to a bewildering extent. Before his eyes was a monster hoisting plant raising rich ore from a shaft hundreds of feet in depth, while in the gulch a huge stamp mill was at work. The bowlder occupied a place of honor in front of a building. Hilderbrand touched it, patted it affectionately, and tears filled his eyes. Presently through the mist of his tears he read the sign: "Drum Lummon Mine, discovered by Thomas Cruse."

During the period of development, when hard luck pressed Cruse to the verge of abandonment, some one advised him to strike Sam Ashby for a couple of hundred. Ashby was a money lender in Helena who knew how to sweat the coin when put at work on good security. Cruse put the matter of a loan up to Ashby. All he got, however, was a fine line of free advice, coupled with the money lender's assurance that he would rather throw paper money into the furnaces of his satanic majesty than loan it to such a "shiftless fellow."

Years after, when Cruse's day of prosperity came, one of the early visitors to the "Thomas Cruse Savings Bank," just started in Helena, was Sam Ashby. The fortunes of Cruse and Ashby had been reversed. Cruse was flush, Ashby empty of pocket. Cruse led his would-be customer to the door, and, in the underscored language of the West, assured the customer that he would rather throw his money into the furnaces of his satanic majesty than to loan it to such "a shiftless fellow" as Sam Ashby.

Soon after his bank was started, at the age of fifty, Cruse decided that he had enough capital to support a wife. Miss Margaret Carter, sister of the later United States Senator Carter, became Mrs. Cruse. The wedding, in 1886, was the greatest social event in the history of Montana's capital. It was a celebration for all the population.

Cruse arranged for an open house and free drinks with every saloon in Helena. Tradition has it that the whole male population of the town got drunk at the bridegroom's expense, and it took a week to sober the people into a working condition. The jamboree was the greatest ever pulled off in the treasure State; no one attempted to rival the score.

The joys of wedded life were of short duration, however. Mrs. Cruse died within a year, leaving a baby daughter, on which the father lavished his affections and means.

What Count John A. Creighton was to Omaha, Thomas Cruse was to Helena. Every public enterprise, every promising industry, drew his support; benevolent and charitable movements commanded assistance from his purse. He was the chief contributor to the building of the Catholic Cathedral of Helena, which was dedicated on Christmas Day, the Methodist Hospital, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Young Women's Christian Association shared in his bounty, and his liberality in supporting the local club kept Helena on the baseball map.

The career of Mr. Cruse was linked in many ways with the active lives of several former Omaha residents. A year or two before Cruse struck Alder Gulch, Patrick Gurnett, Mrs. Gurnett, and three young children started from Omaha with a bull team in a caravan which occupied six months in covering the distance to Virginia City, Mont. Cruse and the Gurnetts probably became acquainted there.

In subsequent years, when the Gurnetts became ranchers in the Missoula valley, south of Helena, Cruse's poverty as a prospector was frequently relieved by the food reserves of the Gurnett homestead.

Frank J. Lange, son of an Omaha family of pioneer grocers, is the active manager of Cruse's Savings Bank, and has been confidential associate and adviser of the millionaire for years past.

Another man, Harry Cotter, married Cruse's daughter, Mary, who died a year ago last November. Cruse and Cotter did not pull together, and the death of the daughter widened the breach, which continued to the gold miner's end.

Put Nickle in Slot, Get Paper Raincoat.

Have you ever arrived in your old home town in a pelting rainstorm, all dolled up in your Sunday best, and been compelled to pass up a quarter to the local bus man or linger around the depot until some good Samaritan with an umbrella is kind enough to escort you to the abode of your family or friends?

Have you ever noticed a flock of pretty but scolding maidens in a downtown doorway or the post-office entrance, or the vestibule of a movie-picture place wildly calling for umbrellas, raincoats, newspapers, brother's, or best beau's silk handkerchief, or anything to prevent that lovely seven or ten-dollar hat from being ruined by the sudden shower?

If you are a masculine reader, have you ever been compelled to "cough up" from three to six dollars in order to get your fair Dulcinea home from play or dance when it is raining pitchforks and black cats and the rubber-coated man on the box has suddenly become so stiff and lofty—in his price, at least—that occasionally one doubts if he can be touched even with a ten-spot bill or a ten-foot pole?

If you have ever passed through any of the above-enumerated experiences—and what man or woman has not—forget it; deliverance is at hand. The hour of the hastily impressed newspaper, the borrowed umbrella, or the painfully extracted cash loan from the hotel clerk or elevator boy is to bob up unserenely no more, for the paper raincoat has taken its place alongside the egg sandwich, chewing gum, and insurance policies placed before the public in vending machines.

The man or woman who drops a nickel for a package of gum to aid in the digestion of his nickel-in-the-slot meal, and then pays a quarter to another machine for a policy insuring him or her against the consequences, may

soon get a raincoat from an adjacent machine as a result of the ingenuity of a woman, who has obtained a patent on a paper raincoat, said to be waterproof. She plans to manufacture the coats in large quantities and distribute them in specially devised vending devices.

It is to be presumed that the feminine raincoat will be provided with a cute little hood, or capote, as they say in French, and possibly the masculine garment will have some attachment that will be quite eskimo and save the wearer's two-dollar derby from gaining an inch or two in circumference. All hail, hoch, also hear-hear to the paper raincoat! Bah to the never-present, disappearing, eye-destroying, pestiferous umbrella.

"Corpse" Smokes in Hearse.

Panic was caused along the road between Jefferson and Chapel, Ohio, by the spectacle of what apparently was a corpse sitting upright in the middle of a hearse and serenely puffing a cigar.

The "remains" which had indulged in this unseemly performance were Will Hodge, of Jefferson. Hodge had attended the funeral of an aunt at Chapel. On the long trip home after the interment, Hodge started riding beside the driver of the hearse.

The intense cold soon chilled him to the bone, and he obtained permission from the driver to get inside the glass case. Here he soon got warm, and, to add to the comfort of his journey, he lighted a cigar. Rural folks along the way were terrified.

Toss on Raft Four Days at Sea.

Twelve of them, ten men and two women, were out there on the Atlantic for four days, tossing on a seamade raft, and no one in New York knew of it until Charles Olsen, the mate, a six-foot, fair-haired Swede, came in on the ward liner *Monterey* and told the story.

It was some story, too, this simple chronological narrative of the breaking up of the American barkentine *Ethel V. Boynton* some sixty miles east of Wilmington, N. C. Olsen said it was God alone who saved him and his mates. None of them ever expected to see land again.

"I won't tell all we went through," he said, half smiling, "because, in the first place, it would take too long, and then, when I get through, you'd think I was thinking things, especially when I told you how the sharks swam round waiting for us and we beat them off, hitting them on their heads with our paddles.

"Maybe I'd better begin at the beginning like I was reading from the log. So I don't forget it, take it down right here now that the twelve of us lived for six days on a two-pound can of tripe and three cans of blueberries."

The barkentine left Mobile December 26th, with lumber for Genoa, Italy, in command of Captain G. W. Waldemar and a crew of nine men. On board was Mrs. Waldemar and her young niece, Miss Gladys Larrock.

"Just at sunrise," said Olsen, "we ran into a hurricane that came up from the south. It got so bad that we hove to at eight a. m. until midnight. It eased up a little, but came up again strong by seven o'clock next morning. We fired the deck load overboard—had to do it, and do it quick; she was leaking pretty badly.

"About ten-fifteen a. m. up came one of those racers—you know what I mean, three waves chasing one right behind another. It came full at us and swept clean over. It seemed to curl up about forty feet above the deck.

"That wave tore out about thirty feet of our quarter-deck and carried it over. At midnight we were completely water-logged. Next morning, at two-thirty, we shipped another of those racers, and it carried off the forrid house and the fo'c's'le deck.

"We got kind of uneasy about the two women. They never said a word. If they were scared, they didn't let anybody know it, and we didn't let them know we were worked about 'em. At six a. m. we cut away the main and mizzen sticks, and thought for a while we were going to stay above water, but at nine a. m. we knew it was all off.

"About nine-fifteen a. m. we launched the yawl. But what was the use? We just did it on a chance, anyway. That yawl had hardly hit the water when she was smashed to pieces against the side.

"Big sticks of lumber from our jettisoned cargo now slammed the barkentine hard. At ten a. m. the starboard side opened up. That was some day. At eight-thirty p. m. the foremast jammed itself through the bottom; a big part of the foredeck drifted away with it. We were just simply going to pieces. We didn't know where to lash the women, because we couldn't say what part would go away next.

"The lumber in the hold was just raising hell. The morning of the next day, at three-thirty o'clock, the stern broke off entirely. At five-thirty a. m. the main deck splintered and so did the after house. A half hour later we made a raft out of the roof of it. We all got onto it, lashing the women. They lay flat and had a hard job to keep from choking, because the waves were hitting us hard.

"At seven-thirty a. m. we sighted the main deck, and started out for it. It took us two hours to paddle. We used pieces of the lumber that drifted to us. When we all climbed on board, we made fast the raft to it. That was the last thing we did, because at eleven p. m., after three days and nights on the drifting main deck, the thing bu'sted to pieces.

"That was the only time the women showed excitement. They didn't want to get back on that raft. The little gal, Miss Larrock, she lives in Boston, like I do. She said to me: 'Mate, we will never see Boston again.' I said: 'Oh, yes. Don't you give up, little gal, not much.' She laughed—it sounded like she was laughing—and she said something she read some time out of a book. 'Well, mate, we will die with good and true hearts.'

"Well, we didn't die. The Ward steamer *Manzanillo* came along at ten-thirty o'clock the morning after the main deck bu'sted to pieces, and we can thank Warner, the cook, that she saw us. He grabbed the code flag K when we left the vessel, and we stuck it up on a piece of lumber on the raft. It is a red flag, with a yellow cross, and they could see it better than most any flag."

Olsen turned to the cook and slapped him hard between the shoulders. "Freddy, old boy, we never missed a meal, did we?"

Warner winced and acquiesced.

"Yes, sir," continued the mate, "the twelve of us lived for six days on that measly two-pound can of tripe and three tins of blueberries. Freddie, here, opened

the can of tripe with his teeth and an old fork. Then he speared a piece at a time on a wire and handed it around three times a day.

"And, by gosh, the skipper looked at every piece that was swallowed. He said: 'I caution you fellas to go light on that tripe, because we might be a long time here. One of the three cans of berries was given to four of us. We had a three-gallon keg of dirty fresh water with us on the raft, and it tasted fine."

The *Manzanillo* landed the Boynton's crew at Santiago, Cuba, where they were cared for in a hospital. The skipper and his wife and niece later went by steamer to Mobile.

How "Long" is a Kiss? "Long" Meant, Not "Why."

How long is a kiss? No, not "why?"—nobody so foolish as to ask that—but "how long?"

"As long as you can hold your breath," somebody has said, but the question which moving-picture censors and actors and actresses are debating now is, how much film a kiss may, with propriety, fill.

"Three feet is the limit," said a recent ruling of the Chicago board of censors.

"That's too much," said Miss Ruth Stonehouse, one of the favorites of the "movie fans." "No kiss has a right to more than one foot of film.

"You see, when an actress is kissed on the stage, it isn't because she wants to be kissed, but because the artistry of the play demands it, to indicate emotion on the part of the stage characters. It is utterly impersonal, you know."

"It is?" ventured the interviewer.

"Why, of course. It isn't really the actress who is being kissed, but the character she represents. Sometimes an unskilled actress uses the prolonged kiss to convey her idea of a love scene, but if she understands the art of expression, it is unnecessary."

"But would you limit the real, honest-to-goodness love kiss to one foot?" asked the "cub" reporter anxiously.

"We were talking of the stage," she replied gracefully. "The kind you mean, my dear boy, are a quite different affair."

Oklahomans Plan Second Wolf Drive.

A wolf drive on a large scale occurred in the hills west of Greenfield, Okla., a few weeks ago. The ground covered was about twenty-five square miles. The lines were formed at ten a. m. and at the signal shot thousands of hunters began to move in toward the center.

When within a mile of the center, all lines were halted and orders were given by the captains to cease firing until the encircling line could be formed solid, but before this could be accomplished, many wolves escaped. When the hunters closed in, eight wolves were discovered, but five of the eight managed to get away. Many rabbits were killed, however.

There will be another hunt over the same ground and considerable added territory. The circular sent out to all residents of the vicinity says the recent drive was not satisfactory, as several wolves were allowed to make their escape. It is now proposed to have a big wolf drive and barbecue dinner after the round-up to all that go into the lines and help make the drive a success. It has been decided that the captains issue tickets to all men in their respective lines, all able-bodied to take part in some line. The committee asks the hearty coöperation of every man within the adjoining territory to make this drive a success, as it is not a matter of sport only, but an effort to rid the country of wolves.

The drive will cover forty-nine square miles, making each line seven miles in length. "We want to make this drive the most successful of any held in Oklahoma, and ask that you leave all booze at home to prevent accidents.

"All firearms are barred except shotguns, and no shot to be used larger than No. 4."

The circular further says:

"Each captain will be entitled to four sergeants to help him with his mile. There will be no shot fired from nine a. m. to ten a. m., the time of starting. The signal to start will be given at the southeast corner promptly at ten a. m., each captain to fire his gun, and the sergeants to fire their guns in turn until the signal is carried entirely around the lines.

"All wolves are to be sold at auction, and the proceeds to go to pay for coffee and bread. The meat is to be donated and barbecued on the ground for all who hold tickets. So be sure that you are in one of the lines in order to get a ticket. Ladies are invited to the round-up ground and will get their dinner free.

"No quail to be shot, and all rabbits to be saved and sent to Oklahoma City, to be distributed among the poor.

"Also please remember, no shooting in the center at round-up ground. The drive will be held immediately west of Greenfield."

Is Champion Hose Knitter.

Without doubt "Aunt Sallie" Hardly, of Big Laurel, Va., is the champion hose knitter in the world. She has just celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday by knitting a pair of men's hose. Her hobby has always been knitting. She could knit a pair of men's hose in two days when she was nine years old. Aunt Sallie thirty years ago began keeping a record of hose knit, and since that time has completed 10,005 pairs, she says. "I believe that in all I have knitted over fifteen thousand pairs, and have hopes of making it twenty thousand before I reach one hundred, which age I believe I will live to see," she said.

Girl Rifle Team Gets "Defi."

The girl's rifle team of the Iowa City High School, Iowa City, Ia., has been challenged by a girls' rifle team of Washington, D. C., and probably will accept the "defi." The coach is Professor C. E. Williams, a member of the Iowa university national championship team of other days, and now coach of the national high-school champion five of Iowa City.

Small Pitching Staff Best, Says Old-timer.

Jimmy Ryan, veteran player and one of the best of the famous Chicago Colts, believes baseball is going back to the old days, when five pitchers were all the biggest club would carry.

"At present," he says, "we find big-league clubs with ten or more pitchers on the pay roll, when three or four are actually doing the work. What is the result? Why, these regulars are liable to be pretty because they have to perform the heavy tasks and at the same time see six or seven men sitting on the bench drawing

pay and performing no actual labor in championship games.

"'Why do I have to do so much and wear myself out, when those guys are having it so soft?' they frequently say to themselves. And you can't blame them.

"Instead of a dozen high-priced men stepping on each others' toes, I believe that the day is coming when six will be the limit any club carries. Manager Stallings, of the Boston Braves, has shown to the present generation that it can be done.

"Back in the eighties, when I was pitching, John Clarkson, another fellow, and myself would do the bulk of the work. And it didn't hurt us any, either. We were in shape, and had to keep so."

"It was seldom one heard a pitcher say he was feeling bad then, or had a kink in the arm. He had to get out and work or lose his job.

"They can talk all they want to about baseball's improving. But I fail to see it that way. We could teach the present-day players a lot about the game, and I'm not the only one who thinks so.

"Hard work never hurt any ball player. You see what it did for the Boston Braves! It won them a world's championship."

Catches Coyotes in an Original Manner.

A coyote likes to have a newspaper clipping to read before it puts its foot in a trap. This is according to the philosophy of John Harvey, of Riverside County, California, who has about two hundred animals to his cerdit—by traps, shotgun, and poison.

Harvey's favorite trap is one of the familiar steel-jawed type with a strong spring at each end. He sets it with his knees, by bringing almost his whole weight on the springs. The spot chosen is usually on plowed or cultivated ground. The flat pan, or trigger, of the trap is covered skillfully with a piece of newspaper about four inches square, and all is carefully covered with earth. Even the six-foot chain and drag are concealed. Then over the place spread a lot of chicken or bird feathers, and any other available animal or fowl trash, such as entrails and pieces of pelt. This proves the undoing of Mr. Coyote when he comes prowling about in the night.

The trapping is generally done in the fall or winter, after the buzzards have migrated, as the bait is also tempting to that kind of "health" birds.

Bars Men Who Drink Liquor.

The Milton Manufacturing Company, an ironworking concern which has the largest plant in Milton, Pa., with hundreds of employees, has posted notices in the plant, barring all men who use intoxicating drinks. Employees who have signed saloon applications for the establishing of saloons, now before the Northumberland County court, must have their names withdrawn from the applications if they desire to continue in the company's service.

Lost Diamond Mine Discoverer is Found.

The lost locater of Kimberley lost diamond mines has been found. Joseph H. Meyers, for whom a world-wide search was started three months ago by men whom he had interested in a South African diamond-mining proposition, has written to the stockholders of his company explaining his long silence and giving a report on the prospects of the undertaking.

Meyers had been missing since July 5, 1910, and Doctor Fred C. Wheat, of Minneapolis, Minn., last November asked members of the Iowa Alumni Association to "comb all the quarters of the earth" in an effort to find him. Meyers was a graduate at the class of 1888, University of Iowa.

Meyers is a mining engineer, and his wife is said to be an expert in minerals. In 1904 he was in charge of a large mine at San José, Cal., where he befriended an old Scotchman named Sandy McDonald. When the old man died, he showed Meyers a map giving the location of a valuable diamond mine near Kimberley. This map, he said, he had secured from another Scotchman.

Meyers, at first skeptical, finally went to Kimberley, found the mine, and returned with the report that in a few days he had dug out five hundred carat weight of gems. He interested his friends in the United States and secured $25,000 to buy the land. If he had taken it as a diamond claim, he would have had to split the diamonds with the government.

Returning to South Africa, he found that the price of the land had gone up as a result of the discovery of other mines near, and he was forced to return to this country and raise $10,000 more. He was last seen in San Francisco.

In a letter to J. L. McLaury, of Glenwood, Minn., Meyers, writing from Fresno, says he is still blocked in his effort to secure title to the diamond property, but that the obstacle may be removed any day.

Doctor Wheat refuses to discuss the details of the venture, although he said that he was satisfied that Meyers was absolutely honest, and that eventually the proposition would be a success.

King of the Rabbit Hunters.

Stephen Osborn, seventy-eight years old, who lives five miles southwest of Gentry, Mo., claims the distinction of being the champion rabbit hunter—for his age, at least—of northwestern Missouri. He has killed 500 rabbits so far this winter, and is not through yet.

Osborn, who is an expert shot, does his hunting in a buggy which is drawn by a twenty-one-year-old horse. He is accompanied by two dogs. The dogs scare the rabbits from their hiding places; then, after the fatal shot is fired, they bring the dead animals to the hunter, who is not compelled to leave his buggy. Osborn says his best day's work was forty-nine rabbits out of fifty shots.

Modern Lumberjack a Real Aristocrat.

Should an old-time lumberjack wander back into the neighborhood of Mellen, Wis., searching for old, familiar scenes, and with the possible desire to once again, for a brief time, enter into the old calling for pastime or physical improvement, he would be apt to make a hasty survey of present conditions, and, with a voice softened by disappointment, declare: "No, this is not the same—not at all the same. This may be all right for a minister's son, but not for me—not for me. Too much like Chicago."

Last week residents of Mellen had an opportunity to watch a train of new boarding cars switched out into the woods over the logging railroad of the Foster-Latimer Lumber Company. The cars were built in the local car shops of that concern and are the last word in quarters for woodsmen.

The outfit comprises a "kitchen car," equipped with the most modern kitchen appliances, such as can only be found in the culinary departments in hotels of large cities; two "sleepers," equipped with steel double-deck beds, springs, and mattresses, there being no bunks, but regular upper and lower berths, each for two persons and provided with individual ventilating windows; in the roof are also eight patent ventilator stacks. The two diners are provided with individual tables for setting four persons each.

The entire train is comfortably heated by steam heat. The cars are provided with hard-wood floors, neatly painted inside and out, well lighted, and also provided with the latest model gasoline-lighting system.

Set New Roller-skate Mark.

Frank Bryant, of Duluth, and Raymond Kelly, of St. Paul, lowered the world's record for relay roller skating when they finished their twenty-four-hour grind in Duluth, Minn. The team skated 348 miles and eight laps.

Fred Martin, of Milwaukee, and Frank Bacon, of Detroit, made the former record two weeks ago at the Madison Square Garden, when they rolled off 293 miles.

Bryant and Kelly showed wonderful endurance, by sprinting the last two hours. They are professionals, Bryant being Northwestern champion on the wheels.

Two Days Under Felled Tree.

A Mexican living three miles southwest of Binger, Okla., was chopping wood, when a tree fell on him and held him fast from Friday until Sunday morning. An Indian chief, "Big Snow," discovered the Mexican's plight and succeeded in releasing him. There were no bones broken, but the Mexican was badly bruised and suffered much from his long exposure to the cold.

Hero Gives His Life to Save Little Child.

This is a story of a brave and heroic youth who sacrificed his own life that a little child might live. The tragedy marked the close of a merry coasting party, and the death toll might have been greater but for the unfortunate hero, Edward Schumacher, aged seventeen years.

Near Dundee, Ill., a fine hill stretches, invitingly long and white in the winter days and nights. For long it has been a favorite spot for coasters, and it was not unusual that the fatal evening found a gay party spinning down the shimmering course. Schumacher sat at the steering lever of the big coasting "bob," with a small child in his lap. Behind were three other boys and four girls.

"Don't be afraid, little fellow," he said to the timid child. "I'll take good care of you, all right."

The sled shot down the incline at a furious speed. Halfway to the bottom it encountered a sharp grade and became unmanageable. The steersman lost control for a moment, and the "bob" darted to the side just as a post loomed up a few paces ahead. Collision was inevitable.

Schumacher's mind worked quickly, and then, without a thought of consequences to himself, he flung the child from him into a deep snowbank. The next instant the sled hurled itself upon the post, with the steersman still at his place.

The child was picked up, unhurt, and of the seven young persons who sat behind, none were injured beyond a severe shaking up, but the boy in whose hands, for a moment, were the lives of all in the sled lived only a few minutes after the crash. But he had kept his promise to the child, even at the cost of his own life.

Is Seventy-five and "Spry as a Cricket."

There is an old lady living in Harrogate, Tenn., Taylor by name, who, at the age of seventy-five years, is the mother of fifteen children, 108 grandchildren, ninety-six great-grandchildren, and 25 great-great-grandchildren, and she is still as spry as a cricket.

New Line Over Continent.

Work on the latest American transcontinental railroad is nearing completion. "Only a few miles remain to link the Canadian Northern railroad from ocean to ocean," said R. Creelman, general passenger agent of the Canadian Northern, when on a visit in Chicago the other day. "The last gap, north of Kamloops, in British Columbia, is being closed at the rate of nearly three miles a day, and the final linking of the unbroken line of steel from the Atlantic to the Pacific should take place before the end of this month. It still lacks more than four years of a half century since the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific linked the two oceans, forming the first continuous all-rail route across the continent. In 1885 the Canadian Pacific was completed. The Canadian Northern is the latest of the transcontinentals. The line extends from Quebec through Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Port Arthur, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, to Vancouver. While the main line is approximately 3,100 miles long, from Quebec to Vancouver, feeders increase the mileage of the system to slightly over 9,000, nearly two-thirds of which has been in operation for a number of years.

"The completed road will be a monument to the enterprise of two famous railroad builders—Sir William Mackenzie and Sir Donald Mann. Their first experience in railroad building came with the construction of the Canadian Pacific thirty years ago. Since 1896 they have been engaged on the Canadian Northern system."

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Tobacco Habit Easily Conquered

A New Yorker of wide experience, has written a book telling how the tobacco or snuff habit may be easily and completely banished in three days with delightful benefit. The author, Edward J. Woods, 230 G, Station E, New York City, will mail his book free on request.

The health improves wonderfully after the nicotine poison is out of the system. Calmness, tranquil sleep, clear eyes, normal appetite, good digestion, manly vigor, strong memory and a general gain in efficiency are among the many benefits reported. Get rid of that nervous feeling; no more need of pipe, cigar, cigarette, snuff or chewing tobacco to pacify morbid desire.

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